THREE WEEKS

AT

FLADONG'S.

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AT

Fladong's.

A NOVEL.

BY A LATE VISITANT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

A race of youthful and unhandled colts,
Fetching mad bounds———

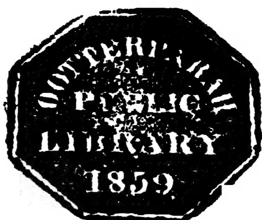
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THREE WEEKS

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CHAP. XII.

Kincat and Steeple meet with an adventure which adds something to their stock of information on the subject of Sir Henry's scheme.—They fall in with Lord Stanza, in a mysterious character and situation—An explanation—Sir Henry and Fribble—the latter worms out of the baronet the particulars of the duel with Lord Stanza,—Sir Henry's progress with Sally—He renews the offer of the necklace, the acceptance of which is waved by Sally until she is convinced of Kincat's perfidy.—The baronet's sanguine anticipations of ultimate success—Sally's opinion of him—her indig .ation and hatred rise in the same proportion with his ardor.—Preparations for the masquerade.

THE eventful evening of the masquerade had arrived; and as soon as it was

sufficiently dark for their purpose, Kincat and Steeple left their lodgings for the purpose of making some few arrangements for the completion of their scheme, which yet remained to be perfected. Hope and expectation were now wound up to the highest pitch, and it only remained for fortune to crown or wither them both.

They had advanced but a few yards, from the street in which their lodgings were situated, when their attention was powerfully arrested by a conversation between two men who were walking before them. A third person seemed to hang upon their rear, as if with a design to catch the particulars of the conversation, while the men engaged in chat, appeared to speak with a loudness of tone which courted rather than shunned hearing.

"But prithee, my dear Harry," said one of them, and it was the first sentence which Kincat or Steeple could hear sufficiently to connect its purport —"hast thou no scruples about this thing? For my part, I love a whole skin, and would be sorry to endanger it for such a paltry sum as Sir Henry has engaged to give you for your service. But what the devil are you to provide for whiskers? And your voice croaks more than Kincat's."

"The devil!" ejaculated Kincat, in a whisper to Steeple, at the same time drawing him still nearer to the persons in conversation, so anxious was he after this incipient disclosure, not to lose a single expression if he could help it.

"Money is money!" returned the

other unknown—"I do not know the thing I would not do for money, if it did not absolutely place my neck in danger, with all the chances of detection against me. I am only required for two hours, from twelve till two, and just to clap on the dress of a Don Cossack, appear very fond of some pretty girl, who is to be provided for the purpose, and to receive her cue, and all this for twenty pounds! Let me tell you, my boy, that the work is not hard, that the pay is sure, and the time it requires not equal to that taken up by a walk through Bond-street. As to whiskers, my lad, what occasion is there for any, since my face will be masked."

"But in case of the detection of you by the real Kincat," answered the first —"how will you manage to get through

the affair? If he should blow you to the company who is to be ready to support you? You ought to be able to extricate yourself?"

"Sir Henry Priapus is to be a minstrel always pretty near me, in case of need;" returned the other—"and Mr. Fribble, and half a dozen of others of their acquaintance will be wandering round us in the disguise of Bacchanals, who will effectually shield me from every thing like danger. As to, the morality of the thing, its all meer moonshine, and besides I have nothing to do with it. I am only to court and kiss a pretty wench, and there's a bank note for me!"

Kincat and Steeple fell back a few paces, to determine what should be done. There was scarcely a moment

left for reflection ; and the first impulse of Kincat's mind was to spring upon the two ruffians whose conversation had thus reached their ears, and to commit them into the custody of some watchmen for the night, so as completely to overthrow the whole of the plot. This idea, however, was almost as soon relinquished as it had been suggested ; and Steeple proposed that they should rather refrain from taking any measures of violence to prevent the scheme from being attempted, but avail themselves of the information they had picked up as to the hour of operation, and the characters to be assumed by the vile schemers, to work a complete counteraction of the effort which Sir Henry aimed to produce, as this would have a tendency to make the revenge of Kincat more full and decisive.

After a few minutes irresolution Kincat agreed to come into the scheme which Steeple suggested; but he had still a curiosity to hear more, as well as to know something of the mysterious third person, who like themselves had appeared rather in the character of a listener to the conversation, than a principal or secondary in the conspiracy. They accordingly advanced a second time, but the discourse seemed now to have taken a different turn, and what appeared to them still more extraordinary, the mysterious stranger was evidently attracted by the same conversation in which they were themselves so much interested, for he now walked with his arms folded as in an attitude of thought instead of attention, and was evidently too much engrossed by considerations confined to himself to throw away any notice upon the persons or

the objects by which he was surrounded. In a few moments the other strangers disappeared, and he remained alone.

The curiosity of Steeple was to the full as much awakened as was that of Kincat, and as the street was particularly private, and the darkness of the night very auspicious, the latter determined, without ceremony, to place himself in a situation which would give him an opportunity at least of discovering the face and features of the stranger, which might afford a ready clue to the mysteriousness of his manner, and show what occasioned the interest he had shown in the conversation.

The stranger was at this moment, under the immediate reflection of a lamp, and the opportunity was too

excellent to be lost. Kincat accordingly advancing in studied haste made a trip which dexterously brought him across the path of the object of his curiosity; and on Kincat's recovering himself, and looking the person in the countenance to make an apology for his apparent awkwardness, what was his surprize and pleasure to see the face of Lord Stanza.

His lordship had recognized Kincat at the same time, and a mutual burst of pleasure broke from both as they met each other's gaze. But the instant astonishment had quitted possession of Kincat's mind, suspicion took hold of it. What could Lord Stanza have to do with this affair? Was it impossible that he could be implicated in the plot against one of his most intimate friends? Such a conduct was totally irreconcile-

able with all those chivalrous feelings which usually glow with peculiar ardor in poetical bosoms; yet to what cause could he attribute the presence of Lord Stanza under such circumstances, and the particular curiosity which he had displayed? If his lordship were really a party in the plot, Kincat felt that he had committed a most egregious, if not fatal error, in thus suddenly making himself known, just at the instant of the bursting of his plot, and consequently at the time when concealment was more than ever necessary.

The suspicion of Kincat was a little increased by the taciturnity which immediately followed the exclamation uttered by his lordship. Several seconds elapsed, and not a syllable more was said; and Kincat very naturally conjectured that my Lord Stanza was so confounded by his

discovery in such a suspicious situation, that he was completely at a loss for words to express any thing like the apology which circumstances required. In a few moments, however, his lordship found his vocal powers, and exclaimed, "my dear Kincat, I really thought you were at this moment in France: but I am uncommonly glad to find myself mistaken. Indeed it gives me pleasure to see you, for I have much to say to you."

"Indeed, my lord!" replied Kincat, relaxing a little from that look of stiffness which he had at first assumed, "then your lordship will now have an opportunity of relieving your mind, if relief will be the effect of a disclosure!"

There was still so much stiffness in

the manner of Kincat, as to convince Lord Stanza that all was not as it used to be between them. His lordship, who wanted not pride, was at a loss how to reconcile this unwonted stateliness of manner to his feelings, and determined by separating from Kincat as abruptly as he had met with him to remove the opportunity of a repetition of that which he could not consider in any other light than an insult. Before he had time, however, to act upon this resolution, Kincat had repented him of his mistrust of his noble friend, and he made an advance to remove the impression caused by his first essay. "My dear lord," said he, "we have been playing the part of listeners here to night, and I suspect your lordship has been in some such situation. I am here *incog.* and since your lordship has accidentally gained pos-

'session of my secret, I will throw myself upon your confidence and friendship to remain unknown."

His lordship paused for a moment and then replied, " my dear Kincat, your unaccountable and unusual stiffness at first caused me some surprize and disappointment. But no more of that, the recollection of clouds should never survive the vapours themselves. Are you aware of the existence of a terrible conspiracy against your mistress and yourself? Are you aware that in a few hours an attempt will be made to deprive you of the poor girl by a stratagem?"

Kincat replied in the affirmative, and in few words, communicated the whole which he had learned to Lord Stanza, concluding with an expression of his sur

prize that his lordship should be so well acquainted with the nature of the plot.

"Cease your astonishment, my dear friend," answered Lord Stanza, "and listen to 'a plain, unvarnished tale.' Two or three days ago, in a conversation with the master of the hotel, I gathered from him, that he was very ill satisfied with the conduct of Sir Henry Priapus. Not a female of any appearance could shew herself in his house without incurring some of those insulting attentions from him which he termed the gallantry of polished life; but which, in fact, were the mere covers of designs the most atrocious, and such as no man of honourable principle could entertain himself, or sanction in the conduct of others. The circumstance, however, which had given him the greatest disgust to the character of the

baronet was the following: on that very morning, the landlord chanced to be in an apartment adjoining one into which Sir Henry and Mr. Fribble had just entered, accompanied by a gentleman and lady, at least as their dress bespoke them: and the doors of both rooms being negligently left open, he could not avoid hearing the discourse which took place, the purport of which proved that the two strangers were intended to perform certain characters at the masquerade this very evening, for which each was to receive a *douceur* of twenty pounds. The man was to perform your character, and the female was to be in the very act of receiving and answering his vows, when as far as the landlord could understand, Mrs. Kincat was to be brought to the spot to witness the supposed infidelity of her husband. The landlord heard no more, but he had gained sufficient infor-

mation to give him a thorough disrelish for the company of such a guest, whose practices were calculated to bring his hotel into complete disrepute. As your friend, he declared that he should have felt dissatisfied with himself had he not communicated this information to me; and on my promising to interfere, he left the business in my hands. I lost no time in calling upon Sir Henry, and challenging him with the baseness of his behaviour, he attempted to deny it, but finding my authority too strong to be overturned by a falsehood, he changed his tone, censured my officious interference, and talked of satisfaction. I expressed my indignation at his conduct, intimating my perfect readiness to meet him, since that seemed to be his desire. An immediate arrangement was made, in half an hour we were opposed in the field, and, on an exchange of pistol shots, he

received a ball in his arm, and went home satisfied. I determined, however, not to suffer the matter to rest, for I was too well acquainted with the character of Sir Henry to believe that he would suffer an accident like this, to have any kind of influence upon his subsequent operations. I therefore requested the landlord of the hotel to give his waiters their cue to be ever on the watch over the actions of a man whom we had so much reason to suspect and dread. In consequence of this request, I have obtained some additional information, by means of which I watched the fellows whom we have just lost from the hotel, and picked up the substance of their conversation; and doubly happy am I now to have the opportunity of acquainting you by word of mouth of all these particulars."

The reply of Kincat was an expression of gratitude to Lord Stanza for thus interfering to preserve his honor. "But, my dear lord," continued he—"in what way did you propose to act in case you had not met with me. Have you any plan formed?"

"I have arranged with Venal, Booby, and Sir Abraham Belton, to go with me to the masquerade, for the express purpose of watching the conduct of the conspirators, and thwarting their designs;" replied Lord Stanza—"and we are to meet two hours hence at the hotel, for the purpose of going together. Our habits will be alike, those of mariners, composing the crew of a vessel; and by this mark you may distinguish us. But pray, my dear fellow, when came you to town, and what do you know of this business?"

Kincat immediately gave Lord Stanza a succinct account of the circumstances which had taken place since they last met, including all the information he had picked up respecting the plot formed against him, and in conclusion, communicating to his lordship his intention to carry into execution a particular plan which he himself had formed to counteract the design of Sir Henry. "But," said he—"my scheme will by no means interfere with your intentions, my dear friend: on the contrary, the presence of such a groupe of well disposed auxiliaries will give me a courage and confidence which must have considerable effect in the issue of my project. We will meet you at the masquerade, and then I will be more explicit. I have still much to do."

This accidental interview was a

powerful cordial to Kincat's spirits, and gave him new energy to pursue the completion of his undertaking. The hour was rapidly approaching when the sports of the evening were to begin; and as soon as he had made the few arrangements which had been previously incomplete, accompanied by Steeple, he took his way to the masquerade rooms; and having habited himself and his companion in the dresses they had determined on, they both emerged into the temple of gaiety.

To return, however, to Sir Henry and Sally: the former had been ruffled in no inconsiderable degree by the unexpected call of Lord Stanza, and the consequences to which it had led; and although in the baronet's bosom, conscience was very seldom heard to exert its voice, in this instance, the internal

monitor did make an attempt to check the progress of Sir Henry in the path of moral turpitude. But the effort was weak and imperfect, and entirely failed of its intended effect. It is true, the reflection that part of his plan was blown to Lord Stanza by some means, which he was utterly at a loss to fathom, caused him some uneasiness; since he very reasonably conjectured that as his lordship was not bound to keep the secret, it might get to the ears of Sally, and thus tend to the utter defeat of his project. But this feeling was entirely unaccompanied by any thing like remorse or contrition for the part he had acted; on the contrary, it produced only a determination to expedite his arrangements to prevent triumph from being wrested from him; and the colloquy which he held with himself he concluded with protesting that if

the event should cost him his life, he would never relinquish the pursuit of Sally, until he had gained the object which he accounted so valuable.

Fribble had found out the circumstance of the duel by dint of his own unconquerable curiosity. He had noticed Lord Stanza's visit, the immediate departure of Sir Henry from the hotel, and his subsequent return with his arm wounded; and he had no doubt that something of the kind had occurred; but how to get at the fact by any other means than sounding and questioning the baronet himself, he knew not, and as his curiosity would not consent to any compromise, he accordingly began to sift the baronet on the subject—"My dear Sir Henry," said he—"it is amazingly queer that duels should ever be fought after cool

deliberation. It is much better to go about such matters when the blood is in a ferment, and the courage boiling over!"

Sir Henry looked at Fribble for a few moments, without making any reply, and then tacitly returned to his task of reading a new novel which had been just brought him by his valet. Fribble, however, was not to be driven from his purpose by this kind of treatment; but with undaunted valour he returned to the charge. "Wounds in the arm, my dear Sir Henry," said he again—"are not often attended by any bad consequences: a little tedious perhaps, but never followed by any danger."

"Humph!" quoth Sir Henry, without raising his eyes from his book; and as Fribble made no instant remark, the

baronet soon afterwards resumed—"They say the authoress of this novel is mad. At any rate she may be classed amongst the eccentrics."

"Mad people are often the best authors!" replied Fribble—"Witness my Lord Stanza, who writes and fights from the impulse of the moment, and generally does both with full effect." As he said this, he glanced an expressive look at Sir Henry as if to read his mind.

"What do you know of Lord Stanza's fighting?" asked Sir Henry, who now began to think that the affair of the duel was not exactly that profound secret he had wished and intended that it should be; and who determined to make Fribble speak out.

Fribble saw that his question had caused a little perplexity to the baronet, and more with a view to answer his own purpose than to reply to the interrogatory of Sir Henry, he answered—"not much to be sure, Sir Henry; that is, not as much as you are likely to know of it. Kincat, Sir Henry, was my antagonist; and if you had asked me, "Fribble, what think you of Kincat's fighting?" I might have been able to give you an answer, Sir Henry, which would have come to the point."

"To what do all these hints and insinuations tend, Fribble?" asked Sir Henry—"Tell me plainly and truly what is your meaning? Have you heard any reports of Lord Stanza fighting a duel? And what do you mean to infer respecting me?"

"Why now, my dear Sir Henry," returned Fribble—"why do you affect all this ignorance? It is of no use to deny the affair: by this time I'll be bound it is in every body's mouth. How many paces? How many shots exchanged?"

Sir Henry had no longer a doubt that Fribble was acquainted with the whole affair, although he was completely at a loss to discover by what means the rumour could have reached him. Concealment was, therefore, no longer necessary. "Since you know so much," quoth the baronet; "I will admit to you that Lord Stanza and I have had a meeting, which terminated in this wound. The cause was simply this: his lordship took upon himself to quarrel with my conduct. Some devil had

whispered to him that I was engaged in a plot against his friend Kincat, and nothing would satisfy him but that I should relinquish my scheme or stand a shot with him. There was consequently no alternative but to meet him in the field: and you know me sufficiently, Fribble, to be sure that I should feel no qualms nor hesitation about giving him an opportunity to obtain satisfaction."

Fribble was happy now that he had fished out the fact which he had been trying after; and as he was no philosopher in these matters, he could not forbear from shewing the feeling of triumph which predominated in his bosom. "Egad, I thought it was so! Now, my dear baronet, never from this moment set me down as deficient in sagacity and ingenuity! Would you believe it,

Sir Henry, no person on earth ever whispered a breath about the affair to me; but I discovered it altogether by means of my own penetration: from this moment I'll turn astrologer; and that's no bad notion; for do you know that lady M—— really does tell fortunes, and receives visitors for that purpose from one to four o'clock, three days in the week. All I require, is a broad brimmed hat, a gown ornamented with all the signs of the zodiac; a wand, a folio book, a chafing dish, and two or three other odd articles!"

It was not without some difficulty that Sir Henry conquered the disposition he felt to quarrel with Fribble as soon as he found that he had, in fact, heard not a syllable on the subject of the duel, but that his questions were merely the result of his own insatiable

and awakened curiosity. While Fribble however, ran on with his rhodomontade on the subject of conjuring, Sir Henry was engaged in discussing with himself the propriety of resenting the impertinent officiousness of a man who, in fact, depended upon him for the means of existence. Fribble was likely to prove useful to him in the winding up of the plan he was about to carry into execution; and this consideration stayed his choler, and induced him to assume an appearance of satisfaction and good humour, which, at the same moment, were as far distant from his real feelings as heaven is from the earth, as he replied, and by the way he had only caught the conclusion of the sentence—" yes, Fribble, I think you might pass for a conjuror, as far regards the qualification of impudence; and I am also of opinion

that you would not be at a loss for words. But you mean to say seriously and in sober truth, that you found out this duel by intuition? If so, your curiosity has been exceedingly fortunate in finding such ample food to satisfy its appetite on this occasion. I am fearful, however, that Lord Stanza may use every exertion to thwart my scheme."

"As far as he knows it, depend upon it, he will," returned Fribble—"I know his lordship to be a staunch friend of Kincat, and one who will be most ready to revenge any real or imaginary insult offered to him. But if you have reason to suspect that he is informed of some of your intentions, the only way to defeat his designs is by promptitude. While he is dreaming of *his* plans, let us execute *ours*; though the devil of it is,

we have no power to expedite the lazy foot of time."

"The only way," cried Sir Henry, after a moment's pause, "is for me to endeavour to improve the impression I have already made on the weak girl's heart. I must attack her perpetually, and by making myself master of her affections effectually counteract every exertion which may have in view the defeat of my scheme. I will to her this moment; for I have advanced too far in this business to relinquish it easily. No, my dear fellow, I will stake life and death upon my scheme. If I fail here, notwithstanding the numerous triumphs which have hitherto crowned my efforts, I shall consider all I have done as nothing; all my abilities as below mediocrity; and all my future plans of pleasure mere *moonshine.* Many weak and

irresolute fellows might be disposed to abandon the object which is so well defended; but I am only the more determined by the multiplication of difficulties. Deterred by no principles of honor, by no touches of conscience, by no yearnings of sympathy:—scared by no anticipation of the consequences which will, or which may ensue from this step of mine, I will bid every danger defiance, and grasp my victim, even though she perish within my embrace."

Such were the licentious sentiments which were blazing in the bosom of Sir Henry when he left Fribble to seek Sally, determined to make a new and bold effort to win her affections. With a view to assist him in this endeavour, he took with him the identical necklace which, on a former occasion, he had offered to Sally, and which she had refused. He flattered

himself, from the glimmerings of love, which he fancied he had perceived in her manner towards him, within the last few hours, that she might now be induced without any very remarkable difficulty, to recant this frigid pertinacity of behaviour towards him, and to accept this token of his homage, as the first unequivocal proof of her change of opinion towards him.

Sally felt herself in a most embarrassing situation: determined as much as ever not to lay herself under an obligation to Sir Henry, she had to revolve in her mind in what way she could decline his offer without coming to an absolute breach. Her hesitation, which was sufficiently evident upon her countenance, was interpreted by Sir Henry in the most favourable manner to himself; and led him to believe that she was fully

inclined to accede to his wishes as soon as she had quieted the usual scruples which females feel, or affect to feel, on these occasions. Thus having persuaded himself, he renewed the offer in a more confident manner, adding his hope that this would be considered the first proof of an unchangeable affection.

Nothing but Kincat's particular desire could have been sufficient to restrain the anger and indignation of Sally at this speech. It required much exertion to still the workings of those passions which rebelled in her breast; but as soon as she had recovered some composure, she replied—"Sir Henry, at any rate you will excuse me if I decline accepting such a present from you, until I have received convincing assurance that I am indeed the deserted being you would have me believe."

"And then, dear excellence, you will make me thrice happy!" exclaimed the enraptured baronet, seizing her hand, and almost devouring it with his kisses, for he had too high an opinion of the ingenuity of his plan to deceive Sally, to think, for an instant, of the bare possibility of a failure in his attempt—"You have indeed made me blest by allowing me the anticipation of your relaxing from that sternness which has hitherto marked your behaviour to me, and of the enjoyment of that love for which I have so long sighed."

The ardor and audacity of Sir Henry's manner raised the blush on the cheek of Sally; but she was compelled to submit partially to the redundancy of the baronet's love. She could not, at the same time, avoid feeling her

hatred of him rise every moment, as she reflected on the shameless perfidy of his character; and the more he lavished his compliments and professions of attachment upon her, so much the more did her contempt of him establish itself. Sir Henry, on the contrary, completely deceived by her conduct, and mistaking altogether the true motives of her behaviour, hourly flattered himself into a belief that he was gaining rapid ground in her heart, and that a very few days more would bring him to the consummation of his happiness. Stimulated by this idea, Sir Henry was perpetually at the side of Sally, resolving that any impression he had made should not be weakened by a want of attention, and that no other individual should have the opportunity of being much with her, to poison her mind against him; for, truth to tell, he

was continually in a state of apprehension lest Lord Stanza, or any instrument of his, should watch some occasion of his absence from her to put her in possession of the circumstances of the late duel, and the causes which led to it.

No other source of consolation had Sally to support her under all the tormenting assiduities of Sir Henry, except that she was conforming herself to the wishes of him to whom her life was devoted, and that every passing hour shortened the period destined for her probation. She had scarcely time to eat, drink, or sleep, without the interference of her officious persecutor; her dressing room was not free from him; her bed room scarcely was a sanctuary against his approaches: if she were ill, he must be her companion to talk away

the vapours or charm the head-ache; in truth he was as her shadow; and the poor girl was compelled to shut herself up in the hotel to avoid the mortification of being compelled to have his company through the streets.

In the mean time, so highly coloured were the accounts given by the baronet of the progress of his intrigue, that Fribble began sincerely to fear that the affair would be accomplished without his interference, and he should thus be baulked of his thousand pounds; and this consideration threw him into doleful dumps, which preyed so visibly upon his countenance, that Sir Henry, who had never been accustomed to see him gloomy and sorrowful, began to be alarmed lest something very serious had happened to him. He accordingly took an opportunity of sounding Fribble on the

subject—" How is it, my good fellow, that your phiz is such a sign-post of trouble within these last few hours? Have you broken another tilbury, and lamed another horse?"

" No, Sir Henry, nothing of the sort!" returned Fribble, ashamed of the real cause of his vexation—" Bless your soul, you must be greatly mistaken, for I never was half so happy in the whole course of my life as I am at this moment. Zounds! I could jump over the moon! But let me offer you my congratulations, my dear baronet, upon the success of your scheme hitherto. I should not be surprized if you were to obtain all your wishes without paying a masquerade visit at all!"

Sir Henry hesitated a little, and then replied—" It will be out of my power

to do that, for Sally has put all my hopes to rest for ever, if she be not satisfied with Kincat's falsehood. So that I must manage to convince her of this, before I can expect to reap any benefit from my exertions. The masquerade must be the place: it is there we must play our cards well; and then, my dear fellow, I shall carry off the wench for whom I am sighing, and you will touch the thousand you sigh for!"

This reply was a complete cordial to the spirits of Fribble, who recovered all his wonted blythesomeness of countenance and manner in the twinkling of an eye, the moment he heard the sound of the thousand pounds. "By my conscience, my dear Sir Henry!" cried Fribble — "You deserve success, and that is more than obtaining it, as some very great play manufacturer has written

it. And be assured, there's no step in the world which I can take for you, and which you may not command me in."

Sir Henry shook him by the hand, and after thanking him for the profession, immediately dispatched him to make arrangements about such characteristic dresses as would be suitable on the occasion; a commission which Fribble took upon himself to perform, with more glee in his face and his heart, than he had known, felt, or experienced during the last twenty-four hours; for the breath which had revived the subject of the recompence promised to him, had instilled into him an infection of the most powerful description, and determined him to enter upon all the business which might be required of him, with that kind of zeal and alacrity which

would substantiate his claim to the recompence Sir Henry had promised him.

Thus matters stood upon the arrival of the evening of the masquerade; and Sir Henry finding Sally perfectly ready to accompany him to the scene where the perfidy of Kincat was to be made clear, considered that he had now overcome every impediment to his wishes. The dresses were procured;—the various persons intended to perform were all assembled, and having received their lessons took different routes to the rooms.

CHAP. XIII.

The commencement of the masquerade—Kincat gets sight of Sir Henry and Sally—Curious mistake of the baronet, which facilitates the execution of Kincat's scheme—Kincat employed in a manner different from what he intended, or had expected—Fribble receives an anonymous letter, and is forced to play in a new character, which causes him no little mortification and perplexity, and raises a fear in his breast that he shall lose his promised thousand pounds—His escape, and interview with Sir Henry, who, to the great discomfiture of Fribble, undervalues his services, and gives him only a tenth of the promised douceur.—*Fribble obliged to take shelter in a closet, by the arrival of the fair* inamorato *of Sir Henry, who, for the first time, unmasks to the baronet, and electrifies both him and Fribble.*

As soon as Kincat and Steeple enred the masquerade rooms, they were

accosted by a variety of different characters; but in vain they looked round for Sally: she was no where to be seen, and, after wandering up and down for upwards of an hour, Kincat began to think that after all, he had been made a mere dupe of Sir Henry, Sally, and Lord Stanza, and that he had been an arrant fool for not paying more attention to the tale of Sophy. Steeple himself was staggered in his opinions, as the time fixed upon for the operations which had brought Kincat and his friend hither, had gone by nearly half an hour without producing any single one of the characters they had been taught to expect to meet.

While, however, they were still in this state of doubt and perplexity, uncertain whether to remain, or to return, they were suddenly accosted by four sailors,

whom Kincat immediately recognized to be Lord Stanza's party; and this discovery relieved him in a moment of a weight of anxiety and of suspicion under which he was scarcely able to bear himself up. Singling one individual, whom from his manner and form, he believed to be his friend Stanza, Kincat took him by the arm, and drawing him on one side, addressed him—"My dear fellow, what has detained you so late? I began to think that you had joined in this scurvy conspiracy, and had resolved to revenge yourself upon me for the suspicions I threw out against you two hours ago!"

"Avast heaving, you lubber!" exclaimed the stranger, in a tone of voice which was very different from that of Lord Stanza—"clap your unintelligible lingo under hatches, and up with a

little common sense. Why what the devil, or who the devil do you take me for? Do you think I am cruising about here under false colours? Look ye, my gallant master, I'm much out in my reckoning if you are not some d——d pirate on the look out, d'ye see, for some little pinnace or another. But it shan't do: I'll maintain the authority of my country, and be his majesty's high constable for the ocean. I'll be in your stern all the night, and d—n me, if I find you steering out of course, I'll bring you to by a shot, which shall make you remember."

Kincat was staggered, and began to apologize for his rudeness in speaking, as he had done, to a stranger, under a complete misapprehension of his real person; and as he said this, he was turning away to renew his search round

the rooms, when another of the groupe of mariners, tapping him familiarly on the shoulders, whispered in his ears—"Come with me, and I will lead you to the very spot where the persons are in whom you are so much interested, and for whom you are at this very moment seeking."

Satisfied that this was the real Lord Stanza, Kincat beckoned Steeple to follow him; and the mariner, giving a private signal to his companions, was as promptly followed by them, while he led Kincat and Steeple to a recess on the other side of the room, which had hitherto escaped their notice, and where, to his great pleasure he saw a male and female character sitting, the former of whom he felt convinced was no other than Sir Henry, and the latter Sally, who gave a start of recognition on seeing him.

Sir Henry himself, for it was indeed the baronet, who, with Sally, was seated in the recess, no sooner saw Kincat, and witnessed the movement of Sally, than he felt persuaded this could be no other than the person whom he had engaged to represent Kincat; and he congratulated himself upon the deception being so very perfect as to take in even Sally herself. The circumstance he could not avoid considering as indicative of ultimate success; and immediately rising from his seat, he advanced to Kincat, and taking him by the hand, exclaimed, in a low tone of voice—"You have acquitted yourself admirably hitherto! Go through the character as you have commenced it, and instead of twenty, you may demand of me twice that sum to reward your ingenuity."

Kincat bowed but made no reply,

and Sir Henry resumed, pointing to Fribble, who appeared advancing towards them, and accompanied by an elegant figure of a woman; "that is the lady to whom all your attentions are to be directed. She has received her instructions, and will shew no disinclination to your addresses. You need not to be backward in paying your respects, nor in taking a few liberties. Your object is to excite jealousy in the lady you will discover with me."

Again Kincat bowed in silence, and Sir Henry left him. Kincat, however, who saw that Steeple was on the alert, and that the plan he had formed was going on admirably, determined to humour this joke. He accordingly whispered his intention to Steeple, and advancing to meet the female who had been pointed out to him, received her from

the hand of Fribble, and promptly began to assail her in all the language of the most studied compliment. It required but a few moments to discover to him that his female companion was merely a painted and excellent casket which contained not one gem of mind. She had no conversible qualification whatever, and it seemed matter of difficulty to her, to make even a monosyllabic reply when a question was proposed to her. These discoveries, however, did not prevent Kincat from paying a lavish attention to her, at the same time that he took care, by frequent glances, to inform himself of what was passing in the recess. Sir Henry appeared to be unweariedly pursuing his plan of weakening the affection, by raising the jealousy of his partner, while she seemed to shew every disposition to give him credit and to accommodate herself to his views.

In fact, the baronet had no cause to complain of coldness on the part of the lady, who, after affecting a great deal of grief at the perfidy of her lover, upon which Sir Henry took care to dwell with much pathos, declared in an affected tone of anger and disappointment, that she would trust man no more. Sir Henry had learned from experience, that there is nothing like the improvement of the moment when a woman is well disposed towards you. For such a moment he had prepared himself in the present case: the instant therefore, that she had closed her ejaculation, the baronet, drawing the devoted necklace from his pocket, which had been twice refused by Sally, laid it in the lap of his companion, and had the superlative happiness to behold it accepted and pocketed by the fair one. After this there was no more room for doubt in Sir Hen-

ry's mind. It only remained for him o make bold advances to win the fortress, and he resolved to strike the decisive blow at once.

As soon, therefore, as he saw that the attentions of Kincat to the fair stranger to whom he paid his homage, had made a sufficient impression, Sir Henry addressed his companion,—" Fairest and best of women! The wretch who can shew such an insensibility to charms like thine, is totally undeserving of the regard of beauty! Come, my angel, you shall find me a model of love and constancy; one perpetually devoted to your pleasures; and assiduous, only to promote your felicity! Come, my charmer, too long have you kept me at a distance; but now that I have convinced you of the perfidiousness of Kincat, there is no more pretext for delay;

and I must claim the promise I with so much difficulty extorted from you—the promise to make me blest!"

A tempest of sighs burst from the bosom of the fair one at this desire on the part of Sir Henry, after which she suffered the baronet to lead her out of the public rooms to a private apartment, where he could give scope to his feelings of love without witnesses. Here Sir Henry became uncommonly urgent with his fair one to unmask; but this she positively refused, alledging that she certainly could not consent that her face should be exposed in a situation of such an equivocal description. To the prohibition thus laid down, Sir Henry was therefore compelled to render a reluctant acquiescence, and to content himself with such a portion of gratification as the fair inconstant chose to

concede to him, but which the baronet hailed as the pledge of more complete enjoyment.

In the mean time, Kincat, Lord Stanza, and the rest of the groupe of friends, having outworn the amusements of the evening, retired to the hotel to join Steeple, who, in the performance of his part in the scene, had left the masquerade some time before, and to enjoy together the successful issue of the scheme which Kincat had planned, and which, with the assistance of Steeple, he had so happily executed. But what this scheme was the reader may be anxious to learn.

A very few minutes after this party had retired, while Sir Henry was enjoying his *tête-à-tête* with his fair companion, and Fribble was debating with-

in himself whether to lament or rejoice at the easy termination of the affair, without requiring any exertions on his part which would give him, an indisputable right to claim the promised recompence, the latter received a note from some strange hand. Poor Fribble turned the paper over and over again, without daring to explore beyond the external address, lest he might find some challenge, or other unwelcome contents; for he could not conceive for what other purpose a letter could be given to him in such a place, or by what means his name had escaped to the knowledge of any one.

When his fears began to subside a little, with a trembling hand, Fribble tore open the letter, and retiring to the most private part of the rooms, in order that his agitation should pass unnoticed, summoned up boldness to read to himself

the following piece of mysterious counsel—"If Mr. Fribble expects to touch the thousand pounds promised him on certain conditions, by Sir Henry Priapus, let him not lose a single moment. He is advised not to let Sir Henry sleep upon it, lest he may dream something which shall have the effect of changing his determination. This advice is given to Mr. Fribble by a sincere well-wisher to him, and from one who thinks a thousand pounds would be better in the pocket of Mr. Fribble than in the purse of Sir Henry Priapus!"

"By all the saints in the calendar"—exclaimed Fribble loud enough for any person to have heard him, but fortunately no one was within hearing, "Whoever thou art that hast written this letter, thou art a man of decided good taste, and a d——d civil fellow; and I will act upon

thy advice with all the expedition in my power. 'Lest he may dream something!' Humph, now I am in truth no conjuror, but I can see that this means something! What the devil could he dream about that would induce him to change his mind? However, it is not my business to stand *shilly shally*, when so much money is at stake; so by the Lord, I'll wait for my voluptuous baronet, with his liquorice tooth, and try all in my power to lighten him of the sum stipulated for!"

Fribble had accompanied these ejaculations with a considerable violence of gesticulation, the result of which was an erroneous impression that he was performing the part of a *maniac;* and a groupe of personages of both sexes, excited by curiosity to see how he supported the character, had by the time he

had ceased speaking, gathered round him. Fribble, unconscious of the mistake into which he had led them, was at a loss to understand their object in thus pressing upon him, and was agitating in what way to satisfy and extricate himself at the same moment, when he was anticipated in his intentions by a wag, who, assuming more boldness than the rest, accosted him with—" Pray, sir, may I ask the cause of a man of your intellect being thus scurvily treated?"

" Scurvily treated!" " Man of my intellect!" echoed Fribble, beginning to be seriously alarmed, without knowing why.—" Really, sir, I shall feel much obliged if you will tell me what plots are in agitation against me? What have I done to deserve scurvy treatment?"

" Why, sir, I dare be bound," resum-

ed the wag—" that you are some great writer who has lampooned too severely the vices of the age; and that some dissipated wretches, by way of revenging themselves upon you for blows which they have felt, have resorted to the detestable, but too common plan of getting you locked up in a mad-house. It is really shameful to reflect how genius is used in this degenerate age! I wonder much that Pope and Churchill did not end their lives in Bedlam, or some kindred receptacle!"

" Well," thought Fribble to himself, " this is the most excellent joke I ever knew!" He relapsed then into a fit of thoughtfulness for a few seconds, during which he endeavoured to think of some plan by which he might rectify the error of those about him, and rescue himself from persecution: the increasing

pressure of the crowd, however, and the varied and mortifying nature of the remarks which incessantly invaded his ear, precluded the possibility of collecting his thoughts sufficiently to arrange any plan by which he might effect his purpose. Stung to the quick by the insolence of some, and the affected pity of others, Fribble soon lost that equilibrium of temper which he usually preserved, and making an effort to break the groupe, exclaimed—"Do you think me mad?"

There was a boldness in his tone and manner which were very indicative of insanity; and so powerful was the impression made upon the spectators by his movement, that several of them could not avoid clapping their hands, and shouting "Bravo!" in token of their approbation of the ability he dis-

played in the character—"Mad as a March hare!" returned the wag—"Worse than the most incurable lunatic in St. Luke's!"—"Zounds," said another---"Mad Tom in King Lear, was never half so well performed!"

The big drops stood upon the brow of Fribble, as he heard himself set down for a mad-man, and bethought himself of the thousand pounds which were put in jeopardy by every moment's delay. At this very instant too, to complete his terror, he saw Sir Henry himself, and his female companion enter the room, and walk across as though they were about to leave the festive scene. He was now almost mad in good earnest, and no longer able to contain himself, he roared out most vociferously, "There they go, by Saint Anthony, and if I don't look sharp, I

shall be dished out of my thousand pounds! Ladies and gentlemen, for God's sake make way, and let me pass for a thousand pounds!" And he then made a new effort to disentangle himself from the throng.

Incited, however, by the suggestions of the wag, who had already made himself conspicuous by addressing the supposed maniac, and who was one of a party evidently disposed to play off their wit upon Fribble, the crowd compacted itself more closely together, so as completely to prevent the escape of Fribble. "His keepers will be here soon," said one---" and it is but charity to him to keep him out of mischief until their arrival!"—" As he seems to be outrageous," quoth a second—" a little flagellation might be effectual."

"D——tion!" roared Fribble—"Am I to be imprisoned and flogged without having given offence! Let me go, for the love of God, let me go! If you detain me another hour, I shall be ruined past all hope of redemption! Let me go; for God's sake, let me go."

All his ejaculations, prayers and outcries, however, only tended to impress upon the minds of all around him, more strongly, the conviction that he was supporting the character with all his might and main. In another part of the room, there was a female mask delivering lectures upon *animal magnetism.* It was suggested by one individual, and instantly adopted by all, that the lunatic should be taken to her, to be acted upon by the principle which she had been for two hours labouring to illustrate. In a

moment after this resolution had been formed, half a dozen men had laid violent hands upon Fribble, who, to do justice to his spirit on this occasion, no sooner found himself so unmercifully handled, than he began to curse and kick with prodigious force both of voice and of action, and to roar out that he was no more mad than the wisest amongst them, and that he was sure he had fallen into the hands of swindlers and pick-pockets, instead of being with well-bred company as he had originally thought himself to be.

All his words were wasted on the desert air and all his efforts of no avail: by force of arms he was carried to the female lecturer, who was informed that he was a poor gentleman labouring under insanity, and therefore a fit subject for her operations of magnetism.

"You are fit subjects for the devil who say so," exclaimed Fribble, who began to feel very bold and courageous on the business, as he thought of the danger of losing his money. "But let me go, and I'll say no more about it—detain me, and I'll trounce ye all!"

"He appears to me to be decidedly mad," exclaimed the lecturer—"but if his malady be a mental disease, you must be aware that my power over it is extremely limited and uncertain. That which is immaterial is unsusceptible of attraction; and that which will not obey the magnetic influence is out of the pale of my ability. The more I look at the poor man, the more I am convinced not only that he is mad, but that the *mania* by which he is afflicted is of the most inveterate species. Mark the violent muscular agitation to which

he is subject, evident in the continual clinching and opening of the hand, and the violent vibrations of the whole frame. Observe the convulsive movements of his heart, and the restlessness of his body. His struggles are the actions of a man in the worst stage of the disorder: there is no coherency in his conduct; no consistency in his gesture; no connection in his language. The light of reason is withdrawn, and he wanders lost amidst the dark and bewildering mazes of language!"

"I know what I am talking about as well as you do, madam;" ejaculated Fribble, who could not silently hear himself so foully aspersed—"and I know I have been terribly abused; and that all your preaching is nothing more than the rankest nonsense."

"We need no other proof of his insanity," returned the lecturer—"the perceptive organ is completely suspended from its operations. Poor gentleman! You hear that he is incapable of distinguishing right from wrong, genius from folly, and the ebullitions of the sublimest intellects from rank nonsense. *Animal magnetism* will cure all bodily ailments, counteract the effects of palsy, apoplexy, and all the countless catalogue of diseases to which the human frame is liable; but it cannot administer to a mind diseased. Can any inform me of the cause of this unfortunate man's complaint? Could I travel to the source I might be able to find some means to remove that which has influenced the streams! Can any one point out to me, if it be hopeless love, or black remorse?"

"Black devil!" vociferated Fribble, making a sudden effort to disentangle himself from the grasp of those who held him---"in durance vile." "I'll tell you what, I won't bear this treatment. I am as sound in my mind, as my lady there who preaches so much about nothing!"

Poor Fribble, however, spoke to the air; his struggle was defeated, and his exclamation unattended to. "I think," cried the inveterate knave who seemed bent upon quizzing Fribble until he had really made him mad—"I think it is remorse, madam, which has overthrown his "goodly mind." You must know, madam, that he is a celebrated writer, who hath for some time lashed most violently the follies and vices of the day; and it is rumoured that his severity has driven some persons mad and

some to suicide. Now if this be the fact, it is more than possible, that in his serious moments, when he has been alone, the ghosts of some of these martyrs in the cause of fashion may have appeared to him, and inflicted upon him those wounds of conscience which have turned his brain. Or, without the interference of ghosts"—

"D——n your ghosts!" cried Fribble—"and d—-n your magnetism! But above all; d—-n your impudence for taking me for a madman! By heaven, if you don't let me go, you shall all repent it! Why I am one of the projectors and proprietors of this evening's masquerade!"

This assertion completely shut the door of sympathy against him; and as he was evidently becoming so boiste-

rous as to endanger the security as well as the peace of all around him, it was suggested that he should be locked up until the amusements should be terminated, or his keepers come in quest of him Others were for making him fast to a corner of the room, where all his violent antics might be rendered of no effect, except to contribute to the amusements of the company. Neither of these modes, however, were adopted, for Fribble himself, seeing a glimmer of hope that he might now make his escape from the scene, in a very cool and good humoured manner, begged of them to send him away to the hotel from which he had come, and to depend on him, he would not return to plague them."

The wags who had made their sport of Fribble were probably aware that

they had gone sufficiently far in their joke, and that if they proceeded to much greater lengths they would incur consequences which would not be easily got rid off: and this might operate upon them more forcibly than the intreaties of him who had been the butt of their merriment. They conferred together for a few moments, before they ventured to give a reply; and at length the same person who had been the orator on the occasion before, signified the readiness of the company to suffer him to go at large, provided he would allow them to conduct him clear out of the rooms, so as to render it impossible that he should again make his appearance to the terror and annoyance of the gay votaries of pleasure.

Thrice happy was Fribble to avail himself of this condition; and, consi-

dering it the very *acme* of prudence, so to regulate his behaviour as to avoid any repetition of the dangers from which he had so recently escaped, he fell from that high tone of anger which, under the irritation of the moment he had adopted, and coming down to his usual levity and affability, submitted to be led out of the rooms, and took his way with no slight feeling of self-satisfaction to the hotel to catch an immediate interview with Sir Henry.

Some persons situated as Fribble had been, would have scorned to suffer the matter to die away so quietly as he did; and in all probability, would have rushed headlong into half a dozen duels by way of obtaining satisfaction for the insult offered by the wags of the masquerade; but Fribble's actions were governed by a very different principle; inde-

pendent of his detestation of a duel—a detestation implanted in his bosom by nature, and scorning to be superseded by any modern notions of intrepidity. He was a man of the world, and considered it most prudent to let insults slide over the surface of his temper without causing any unpleasant sensation or collision of sensations. He reflected that the scene of the transactions was a masquerade, and that at a masquerade, the great principle which ought to regulate every man's actions is that of giving and receiving in the same currency—rub for rub; joke for joke, sneer for sneer, and the like. He was therefore perfectly disinclined to resent the freedoms which had been taken with him, because such resentment would have shewn an ignorance of the world and of fashionable manners, of which he would

have been ashamed, and might have led him into a duel.

"Is Sir Henry Priapus returned?" was the first question put by Fribble on his entering the hotel, to the first waiter he met; and on receiving an answer in the affirmative, without hesitation away he posted to the baronet's apartment; for, as he determined to himself as he hurried along the passage, his was an errand which would not admit of a moment's delay, and where it was much wiser to dispense with the ceremonies of custom than to be guided and governed in this instance, where no less a sum than a thousand pounds was at stake. "It will be the making of me," said Fribble to himself—"it will enable me to carry all my grand schemes into immediate execution. I shall no longer be

compelled to lick the dust off the shoes of this great man and the other. No, by heaven, I'll set up billiard tables, and *rouge et noir* banks, and I'll have an hotel and a private theatre on the true Parisian model; and as to masquerades, I will start some which shall shame every thing of the kind which has been attempted in this most tasteless metropolis; and if I don't make a fortune in two years, why then I shall deserve to be a beggar the rest of my days!"

Such was the nature of Fribble's thoughts as he approached the apartment of Sir Henry: the door was ajar; and Fribble, by way of satisfying himself whether the baronet was alone, put his eye to the chink, and took a survey of the room. Sir Henry was sitting at a table with a bottle of wine before him; a circumstance which Fribble in-

terpreted to his own advantage; for as the decanter was half empty, he very sagaciously inferred that the baronet could not have swallowed a pint of the exhilarating juice without being pleasantly affected by it. Independent of this argumentative conclusion, Fribble read in the baronet's countenance certain expressions of good humour, which encouraged him to enter without fear or doubt of success.

"Ha! my dear fellow, is it you?" exclaimed Sir Henry, rising from the table and holding out his hand to his friend—"Congratulate me, you rascal, upon the consummation of all my wishes! I am the most lucky dog in existence! But who would have thought it, Fribble? The gipsey after all turns out to be a deep, cunning devil, with a sharper eye to her pocket than her vir-

tue! The little devil has got from me my draft for a cool five hundred, before she would allow me even the trifling privilege of a kiss! But she is worth it all, the loveliest creature that ever blessed the arms of voluptuary. Such eyes, Fribble, such a skin—such a form—such glances to fire the soul. Zounds! had I given her a thousand, I had not begrudged it to her."

Fribble was very well pleased with this rhapsody; although a pain shot through his bosom when Sir Henry mentioned the circumstance of his having given five hundred pounds to the lady, for he naturally enough suspected that he would be disposed to make a deduction of this sum from the *douceur* which had been promised to himself. After an instant's pause, however, he resolved to ease his mind of the anxiety which

burdened it by ascertaining the intention of Sir Henry. "My dear baronet," said he, "believe me, there is no man on earth who can feel greater pleasure at the circumstance of your triumph than myself. But I was sure my scheme of the masquerade adventure would do the business. Yes, yes, let me alone for an intrigue of this description, and be all the consequences on my own head, when I fail, unless it is by the interference of others of less skill and experience than myself. I trust, Sir Henry, you will be disposed to give me every credit for the issue of this affair!"

Sir Henry hummed a tune which lasted some ten or twelve seconds, before he appeared to have digested the reply he should give; and this was a most terrible interval to Fribble, who trembled to his very toes lest it should bode any

disappointment to his hopes. Within this short space, indeed, his apprehensions had so metamorphosed the whole form and texture of his thoughts, that he could see nothing before him now but clouds and shadows. In the midst of these gloomy reflections which came over his mind, the reply of the baronet rouzed him—"To be sure, Fribble, you suggested the masquerade scheme; but do you know, my dear fellow, I should have succeeded without having recourse to it; for I had completely won her good opinion before we went near the place. But, however, you will not find me forgetful of your friendship! By the way, I paid the man to day for the horse and tilbury; and to-morrow, Fribble, when we are more at leisure, we will talk over, and see what else can be done to gratify you, my boy!"

There was something remarkably chilling in the manner of the baronet, much more than in the words themselves; although the latter conveyed sufficient to the ear of Fribble to convince him that he was very far from being likely to obtain the promised recompence. It was an object, however, worth contending for, and he determined not to give up so easily, for it occurred to him that he might never again have such an opportunity of making such a handsome sum. He therefore was at no loss for a reply—"My dear Sir Henry," said he, "I know you to be a man of the strictest honor with respect to your word, and I would as soon rely on your promise, as on the coming of the thousand pound bank note if you had this moment placed it in my hand. Nay, to shew you this is my real opinion, my dear baronet, on the strength

of your promise, and the certainty of success in our scheme, I have agreed with a gentleman for a large house at the West End, where it is my intention forthwith to open a splendid and novel establishment."

"The devil you have!" exclaimed Sir Henry, fixing his eyes steadily on the countenance of Fribble, to ascertain if truth was seated there, or whether it was all a joke, and, at the same time, raising himself in his chair,—"Why, what fiend of speculation has thus taken possession of your mind, and routed out common sense? Could not you have waited the issue of this affair, before you had ventured upon an undertaking of such magnitude? To say the truth, my dear Fribble, although no man in the universe is more tenacious of his word than

I am, yet, at this instant I declare I have absolutely over-drawn my banker, and anticipated my quarterly rents. Really now, this is a most distressing circumstance. Perhaps a hundred will do for you for the present?"

Fribble did not suffer the baronet to finish his sentence, lest he might lose the inclination to advance him even a hundred; and a hundred pounds just now was a fortune. He accordingly interrupted Sir Henry with an avidity which shewed how deeply he was interested in the issue of this conversation. "My dear Sir Henry, a hundred will do for present purposes most admirably, and the rest whenever it may be most suitable to your convenience!" He had scarce pronounced the words, before the terms of the anonymous letter which he had received at the masquerade came

suddenly across his mind—"he is advised not to let Sir Henry sleep upon it, lest he may dream something that shall have the effect of changing his determination!" The recollection was like an electric shock. Perchance Sir Henry might have this tremendous dream, and if he did, it would be a clear nine hundred pounds out of his pocket. Fribble determined, therefore, the moment the apprehension came athwart his bosom, to make an effort to anticipate the dream. "My dear baronet," said he; "it would serve me quite as well if you would give me your note for the other nine hundred at twelve months, by which time it will doubtless be quite convenient for you to spare it. Pardon me, my dear friend, for being thus importunate, but my necessities are imperative, and I have no way to bring my

wishes to bear but through your kind friendship !"

" What ?" cried Sir Henry, assuming a sternness of countenance which made Fribble wish he had taken the hundred pounds before he had mentioned the remainder of the sum. " Do you bring it against me in the shape of a debt ? Is this your friendship, Mr. Fribble ? If you chuse to take the hundred pounds, and leave any further recompence to my liberality, you will probably get more than by any other means ; but you must resolve speedily : for I only parted with my charmer for an hour or two, that we might not be seen entering the hotel together, and I expect her here every instant : therefore, come to a speedy resolution ; and recollect that I had won her over to my wishes before we went to the masquerade rooms !"

A hundred pounds, and the possibility of something more, was much better than nothing at all! So thought Fribble, and he blessed his stars that the reply he had made alluding to the other nine hundred, had not induced Sir Henry to go entirely from the bargain. He therefore made answer---" My dear Sir Henry, you completely understand me. I know full well that it is on your generosity alone that I have the slightest claim. I know also that I have done very little, yet I did all that was in my power. Would I could have rendered you a more effectual assistance. My inclination, my dear Sir Henry, was greater than my power. But, you know, my dear Sir Henry, you know I am devoted to your service, and would die to oblige you!"

This humble reply had the effect of

softening down the baronet amazingly, for, writing the draft for a hundred pounds, he put it into Fribble's hand, exclaiming---" You are a good, honest fellow, and if I had not given five hundred to my *chere amie*, I would have added that to the hundred: but I am poor at this moment; and know not what to do for money. But by the way, Fribble, how we shall be able to quiz Kincat whenever he dares to show his face here again! You may be well revenged for your scratch on the cheek."

" And he may rely on it, I will not spare him an inch," returned Fribble— " How often have I heard him declare that he would stake his existence upon the virtue and constancy of Sally! Poor devil! He who pins his hopes on

a woman's faith, holds them very slightly."

At this moment a knock at the door announced a visitor. "This is my dear devoted Sally," said Sir Henry—"how d——d unfortunate! She will be mortified to find you here; step into the closet a few moments, my dear Fribble, and I will give you an opportunity to leave the room unseen by her. In the mean time, you may satisfy yourself, by the evidence of your own eyes, that I have completely won the love of the charming girl, and kicked out of her heart that conceited knave, Kincat!"

Saying this, he pushed Fribble into the closet, and desiring him to lock himself in, left him to his own medita-

tions, which were of a chequered description: for although Fribble felt a disposition to congratulate himself upon the possession of a hundred pounds. The words of the anonymous letter still rung in his ears, and made him tremble lest he should lose the rest of the promised *douceur*. He had, however, but a moment to agitate upon this subject before he heard the door of the apartment open, and applying his eye to a small crevice in the door, he beheld the identical female with whom Kincat had been so gracious at the rooms, still in her masquerade dress. Her mask completely concealed her face, so that Fribble could not see her countenance.

"My charming girl," said Sir Henry —"now that we are free from the gaze

of any observer, and in my own apartment, you will surely no longer refuse to unmask, that I may touch with my lips, that carnation cheek for which so long I have sighed!"

A silence of some seconds gave Fribble time to remark that Sir Henry had not yet seen the face of his charmer, and to feel the influence of something like apprehension in his mind, although he could scarcely trace it to any definable and reasonable cause. Before he had time to think much, he was obliged to call off his attention from his own thoughts, and to listen to the fair speaker, who replied---" I shall no longer, sir, object to gratify your wishes in this respect. Modesty forbad me to take off my mask before; but alas! I have no longer that motive to plead. I am fearful that you will

soon prove unfaithful, as you have done to so many others; and if so, what will become of me? Your desertion of me to the scorn of the world would surely put an end to my existence!"

"I swear eternal fidelity to thee, my angel," replied Sir Henry, in a tone of rapture. "I never felt for others what I have felt for you. You have taught me truly to love, and may heaven forsake me in my direst necessity if I prove false to you!"

"I am satisfied!" replied the fair masque, and throwing off at the same time the masquerade dress, which she wore over her own, and the mask which had hitherto concealed her countenance, she discovered to the confounded and electrified baronet, as well

as to Fribble, whose eyes were strained to catch a glimpse of her features through the cranney in the door, not the face of the charming Sally, but that of an utter stranger.

CHAP. XV.

First feelings immediately after a terrible disappointment — Fribble in a fright, and his fears increased by the suspicions of the baronet—his confusion increases Sir Henry's suspicions, which are fully confirmed by the confession of the girl, who to make her own escape, implicates Fribble in the mess—the female is allowed to depart; but Fribble finds that he has a terrible account to settle with the enraged Sir Henry—Fribble's consequent perplexity and determination to apply to Kincat for relief—the consequences of this application.

Sir Henry no sooner saw that he was duped, than he broke out into the most indecent strain of invective, and could scarcely refrain himself from offer-

ing absolute violence to the female who had performed such a principal part in putting this trick upon him. The terrified girl, when she saw the passion of the baronet, and heard his execrations, would most willingly have made her escape, but Sir Henry effectually prevented her from carrying any such intention into effect, for he rushed towards the door, and turning the key put it into his pocket; and swore most vehemently that she should never leave the apartment until she had made complete confession of the plot, and of the part which she had taken in it.

But if the baronet was in this state of extreme agitation, Fribble was scarcely a whit more cool, when he saw through his peeping hole the result of the stranger's unveiling. His first idea was to congratulate himself

upon having received a hundred pounds; but what if Sir Henry should make him refund before he left the room? This was a horrible suspicion; and poor Fribble would at that instant have freely given one fourth of it to have discovered a sliding pannel, no matter whither it had led, so that it would have conducted him far from the presence of the enraged baronet. As the rooms and closets of the hotel were not furnished and fitted up with these accommodations and conveniences, Fribble wished for them to no purpose; and while he was in this state of apprehension his fears were increased by an exclamation of Sir Henry—"I have one in this closet who has perhaps colleagued with you to put this cheat upon me. But you shall come face to face, and confound each other, if it be as I suspect."

As he said this, Sir Henry advanced to the door of Fribble's retreat, and desired him in no voice of uncommon gentleness to open the closet and come forth. The poor prisoner absolutely perspired from head to foot when he heard the terrible suspicion which the baronet threw out against him; and so agitated was he, when called upon to liberate and show himself, that it required some few minutes to summon up his courage, before he could obey the mandate of Sir Henry, and make his appearance on the stage of contention.

"Come forth, thou renegade from friendship and gratitude!" vociferated Sir Henry, seizing him by the collar, and dragging him into the room; for the confusion of Fribble's manner, and the pale terror which sat on his counte-

nance convinced the baronet that he had not suspected him without cause—"Come forth, thou scorn of scoundrelism! Thou monster of vice and iniquity make thy appearance; down upon thy knees, refund my money out of which thou hast swindled me; confess all the base transaction; and tell me honestly if any other persons were implicated in the plot; or, by Saint Jerome, I'll cut thee into mince-meat this moment, and scatter thee about the pavement! Answer me, did Kincat bribe thee to turn traitor to him who was thy best friend?"

Although Fribble was fully persuaded of his own innocence, he rightly guessed that it would be a much more difficult task to satisfy Sir Henry upon that subject; and if it would not indeed, he was so completely confused, and so

utterly dumbfounded by the charge brought against him, that he had no more vocal powers than a dead parrot. As soon, however, as speech revisited his tongue, he made a bold and emphatic effort to clear his innocence from the vile load of doubt which had just been cast upon it. Falling upon his knees, with all becoming humility, for, to say truth, the manner and menace of the baronet had curdled his blood, and made him already half dead at the contemplation of what might possibly happen; Fribble stammered forth—"Indeed—indeed—my dear—dear baronet—you accuse me most—most wrongfully—you do—'pon my honor—my honor—as a gen—gen—gentleman! I never, in my life—'pon my honor—set eyes upon that lady!—I know of no plot — plot — plot — against you, Sir Henry—and as to Kin—Kincat,—why

—'pon my soul—I have not, to my knowledge, seen him since I drop—drop—dropped in the field of honor!"

Sir Henry set this all down as mere prevarication. Walking therefore most deliberately to the drawer of his writing table, with all the coolness imaginable he took out a brace of pistols, at sight of which Fribble dropped prone upon the carpet, and the lady sunk into a chair which stood close behind her; and advancing once more towards them, he resumed—"Now Mr. Fribble, and Mrs. What you please; look ye here! You see these pistols; they are both loaded, and by all that is heavenly if you don't instantly confess the whole of the affair, you shall both say your prayers, and make your exit within five minutes! Nay, if I see any thing like equivocation—any con-

cealment—or the slightest variation between your stories, I tell you plainly that from that instant, you may consider yourselves as dead as mutton. Come, madam, I'll begin with you!"

Whether the poor girl thought Fribble was the man who had engaged her to play the part she had undertaken, or whether she was of opinion that by criminating him she might disarm the anger of the baronet, and by this means make her escape, it may be difficult to ascertain; but whatever might be the motive, after a very brief consideration, the damsel replied—"Dear Sir Henry, will you promise me, upon your honor, that if I tell you the whole truth, and the parts we have both performed, you will suffer me to go away, without offering me any further injury or molestation whatsoever?"

When Fribble heard this unexpected and overwhelming declaration, he could not forbear from raising his head from the carpet, and exclaiming, as he glanced a very severe look at the girl, "Oh, thou lying devil!" He would have said more probably, but Sir Henry put an end to the ejaculation, by sternly bidding him to look to himself, and prepare to meet the consequences of his treachery, instead of endeavouring to aggravate the crime he had committed, by attempting to prevent a candid confession of its nature and extent. Fribble had no inclination to waste words, at a moment when he had scarcely breath enough left in his body to keep him alive. He therefore sighed all the rest of his curses to himself, and began to cogitate for a few moments upon what might be the probable consequences for which he had to prepare

himself. Would Sir Henry kill him? It was not impossible; for they were shut out from the sight of all the rest of the world, and the baronet was too determined and desperate a character to stand considering about after matters which might take place. Fribble therefore gave way to the apprehension that he should be surely murdered if the girl did really criminate him; and he seemed to feel already the bullet from one of the pistols which the baronet held in his hand, rioting amongst the scanty brains which he possessed. He looked to the door to calculate the chances of escape, but the first glance brought despair to his mind, for he saw that the key was taken out of the lock.

There seemed to be no alternative but a calm resignation to whatever fate

might have in store for him; and Fribble seeing all hope cut off, and feeling convinced that he should be obliged to fight a duel at three paces distance, or submit to some such desperate proceeding, which would surely terminate his earthly career, began to repeat to himself the Lord's prayer as perfectly as he could, for it was a thing he had never above once before resorted to in the whole course of his life, and attempted to resign himself to death with all the courage and composure which he was able to command to his assistance.

Sir Henry no sooner heard the answer of the girl than all his suspicions were confirmed to his own full satisfaction; and he immediately set down Fribble for the most ungrateful rascal in the universe, and a very fit subject to make an example of. As for the female she

was too weak for him to wreak his vengeance upon; and therefore a double visitation of terrible consequences must fall upon Fribble; and Sir Henry resolved as soon as he had obtained all the facts which he could fish out of the two culprits, to call Fribble into the field, and to insist upon that close fighting which could alone satisfy him.

"I will give you the promise you require," returned Sir Henry: "but it must be upon the condition that you adhere to the strict truth; for if I find you deficient in any one fact, I will recant the promise I make you, and inflict upon you the whole weight of my vengeance."

"Indeed, Sir Henry, I will tell you every thing," answered the girl, whose

courage seemed to revive at Sir Henry's promise. "I am a poor unfortunate female, who have known that gentleman there for some time. A few days ago he asked me to go to the masquerade this evening, and to go with the gentleman he would point out to me, but neither to open my lips to speak to him, nor to take off my mask, on any account whatever. So I went, Sir Henry, and met him by appointment, and he pointed you out to me sitting by the side of a lady just my own size, and dressed exactly as I was. Presently you got up to speak to some gentlemen, and left the lady on the seat: and the moment your back was turned, she jumped from her chair and ran to some gentleman who was waiting for her, and I was directly handed into her situation."

The girl had stated the occurrence ex-

'actly as it took place, substituting in her relation, Fribble for Steeple; and the story appeared to carry such a stamp of veracity upon its face, that Sir Henry could not do otherwise than yield credit to it. For a moment he seemed confounded by the conviction of Fribble's villainy; but his silence and confusion were transient: the girl, having finished her tale, shewed strong symptoms of a wish to make her exit, fearful, probably, that Sir Henry would next demand the return of the five hundred pounds she had obtained from him. The baronet, however, taking hold of her arm, told her he had not yet done with her, and immediately resumed his questions, —"What instructions did you receive? How came you to break the condition not to speak? What was to be your recompence?"

After a moment's pause, the female made answer that she was ordered to get as much as she could from Sir Henry, and of course she could not get any thing unless she asked for it; and that the gentleman before her had promised to give her twenty pounds for her performance.

"Precisely the sum I mentioned, by heaven!" exclaimed Sir Henry. "Every thing appears perfectly clear and conclusive. I have been the dupe of the most infamous treachery: but I will be revenged most amply; I will be revenged, though my vengeance should cost me my life!"

"Stay a bit, my dear baronet, for God's sake do not be so hasty in condemning me!" cried Fribble, as soon as

his terror would suffer him to speak. A sudden and happy idea had just shot across his mind that he should fix the hussey for a liar if he asked her to tell him his name. Turning round to the girl, therefore, with an air of conscious triumph, as though confident that his justification was in his own power, he addressed her in a very haughty tone—" Now, madam Quiz, since you seem to know me so well, pray who the devil am I? You call me an old friend!"

Fribble, however, had here calculated without his host: for the female he had to deal with had to the full as much ingenuity as boldness. Sir Henry was staggered by the question and the bold manner of Fribble, and began to think he might possibly be innocent; but both the doubts of the baronet, and the triumphant confidence of Fribble were at

once overturned, when the damsel, without confusion replied, " now that is cruel and unmanly of you, after you have so many times sworn me to keep your name for ever a profound secret. You know I was seduced by you, and that I love you so dearly, that I would much rather die than give up your name ! Base, cruel man that you are, to try to bring me to more shame!" As she concluded, she burst into a flood of tears, which moved Sir Henry to redoubled anger, and Fribble to double despair.

" Oh, thou devil incarnate!" was the only reply which Fribble could make, and these few words he ground between his teeth with an appearance of malicious rage which would have prompted him to a more effectual reply, had his courage been equal to his inclination. Under present circumstances, however,

he deemed it prudent to be calm and gentle in his manners, and to keep all his intrepidity in reserve for the occasion which appeared likely to occur to call it into early action. In the mean time, Sir Henry having with difficulty suppressed his boiling ire, coolly enough requested his fair sharper to be kind enough to return him the draft which he had given to her, and think herself well off if she gained no more than the liberty to make the best of her way home, without being lodged in a watch-house.

The female, however, had taken her measures too warily to be thus easily compelled to refund. For fear of accident she had taken advantage of the interval in which she had been separated from Sir Henry, to carry her draft to a place where she had obtained the money for it; and the cash she had deposited

in a place of security. In reply, therefore, to Sir Henry, she answered, with a coolness equal to his own—"If I were disposed to agree to your desire, I have not the power, for I have paid away your draft where I owed it. Besides, Sir Henry, you surely could never intend to take back that which you generously gave, now that I have opened the whole plot to you? I might have staid away from you, had I entertained any doubt of your liberality or honor. Indeed, Sir Henry, I could not have thought you capable of such a request!"

"What!" cried Sir Henry, burning with indignation—"Is it not sufficient for me to be swindled out of the object of my passion, but must I also lose my money? Out of my sight, thou infamous Jezebel, and think thyself lucky if thou escapest death or transportation

for life!" As he said this, he took the key of the door from his pocket, and opening it with one hand, he seized the arm of the girl with the other, and pushing her violently out of the apartment, closed the door against her, and relocking it, once more clapped the key into his pocket.

Now Fribble's time was come, and he began to shiver and to shake in good earnest when he saw the precautions of the baronet to prevent his escape. The loss of his hundred pounds he considered to be much the lightest part of the punishment he was about to undergo, and could he have compromised with the loss of a limb, at that moment, he would joyfully have submitted to amputation, for he feared nothing less than certain death awaited him. He was still lying on the floor, repeating as much of his *pater*

noster as his memory would allow him; and yet in spite of his pious disposition he could not prevent conjectures upon the issue of his present condition from coming now and then across his mind, and these conjectures uniformly gave an inward degree of fervency and devotion to the ejaculations of his mind.

"Thou wretch!" said Sir Henry, as soon as he had fastened the door, and taken a survey of Fribble as he lay extended on the carpet—"Thou something beneath a man in cowardice, and above him in cunning. Have I deserved this treatment at thy hands? Thou scarecrow! Thou pest of all race-courses: thou sucker of the gaming table: thou spunge at all private houses; and black sheep at all public ones: thou being without money, without credit and without principle; now I have got to

settle matters with thee; and whether to annihilate thee with a bullet from this friendly pistol of mine; or to give thee a fair chance in the field at three paces; or whether to prefer breaking all thy bones with my cane, and then posting thee as a villain and a coward in every coffee house, I am at a loss to resolve!"

Sir Henry here paused a moment, and it was a pause full of horror and consternation to Fribble, who was in a violent convulsion from his head to his toes, looking more full of apprehension than a malefactor at the moment when the fatal noose is fitted to his devoted neck. All the various modes of revenge suggested by the baronet, were dreadfully obnoxious to him; but if he could but escape with his life he would willingly submit to any mortification in the world,

"Upon my honor, Sir Henry," said he, in as firm a voice as he could command, and without giving the baronet too much time to make up his mind on this important question—"Upon my honor, I am most scurvily treated; for I am altogether as innocent of this transaction as you yourself are. Appearances, it is true, are very much against me, in consequence of the assertion of this abandoned woman; but would you give her word the preference over the solemn declaration of an old friend? Indeed, Sir Henry, I have had no hand in the business whatever, and as to that creature, I never saw her until she entered this room."

"All this will not avail thee, thou base curmudgeon!" answered the angry baronet—"But I know thou wouldst deny thy father, nay,

thy God, to get out of the reach of danger. But thou shalt not escape me! Yet never shall it be said that I adopted measures of revenge unbecoming a man of honor. Here are two pistols, take thy choice; this room is wide enough for our purpose, and we are alone, and secure from interruption. This is the only way in which my injured honor will allow me to redress myself!"

"What, fight?" roared Fribble, in a mortal fright—"What, fight here? Heaven have mercy upon me, why this is actual assassination! I never will consent to be instantly murdered at the will and pleasure of any one who may chuse to take offence against me. No, no, Sir Henry, I am not quite that arrant fool neither! If we must fight, for which indeed I see no manner of occasion, as I will forfeit my life if I have done any

one thing in the world to give you cause of offence, pray let us fight in an open, honorable, becoming manner, at twenty paces distance, with seconds, and surgeons, and chaises, and every thing in an orderly manner! Fighting here, Sir Henry, where we have not room to miss one another, why what is it but absolute butchery, worse than meeting in a quarry!"

"Thou art an arrant coward, with a soul less than that of a cheese-mite!" cried Sir Henry—"but yet, base as thou art, I have no inclination to incur the responsibility of thy murder. Give me back my money, and see thou meet me to-morrow morning at eight o'clock, on the very spot where thou hadst the affair with Kincat. If thou fail to be there, I will shoot thee whenever I meet thee, as I would a dog which had bitten

me. So look to it, scoundrel as thou art; and fail not to be there at the time."

With monstrous reluctance, Fribble surrendered the draft, and declared his readiness to meet Sir Henry if there were no way of arranging the business. "But indeed, my dear baronet," quoth he—"you will repent of killing me, when you find out that I have served you faithfully throughout the whole of this business, and that you have been deceived by the story which that vile woman has trumped up to get herself clear off. If my life will satisfy you, Lord bless you, take it; for it will be as well put an end to by a pistol-shot, as by starvation; and starve I must, now you have got back the hundred pounds upon which I calculated so much. Pray, Sir Henry, think for a minute, and you

will convince yourself that I am an innocent, and most injured man! I am sure you will, Sir Henry!"

"I'll hear nothing!" replied the baronet, hastily—"I want not to be convinced more than I am already. And as to your whining nonsense, it is merely a repetition of all you said about the meeting with Kincat, and means nothing more than that you are afraid to fight, and would much rather submit to be caned, or branded, or any other shame, than put your life in jeopardy. Be gone, base scoundrel; and be sure you do not fail to meet me, at the appointed time, or expect to be treated as I would treat a mad dog!"

It was in vain for Fribble to use further entreaty, as Sir Henry had already unlocked the door, and held it in

his hand, thus tacitly informing Fribble that his company was no longer desirable. He accordingly slowly retired, and when the baronet had closed the door, and turned the key upon him, he sat himself down upon a chair in the passage, and began to ponder upon the situation in which he was placed, and the best means of extricating himself from it. He was utterly at a loss how to act in this dilemma, and being but in possession of about half his mental faculties, the other half being entirely paralyzed by terror, he was still more perplexed than he might have been under different circumstances. After sitting for about a quarter of an hour, he determined to go boldly even to Kincat, and to endeavour to discover from him some clue to extricate himself from the scrape.

No sooner had he formed this resolution, than he set forward to carry it into immediate execution; and the bare possibility of success had the effect of restoring him to something like composure once more, before he reached the apartments of Kincat.

To return, however, to Kincat, who was left at the moment of his departure from the masquerade with his friends, after satisfying himself that his plan had taken full effect. "I am totally at a loss, my dear fellow," said Lord Stanza, as they entered the hotel—"to understand your scheme. With my own eyes I beheld the baronet retire from the rooms with your *protégée*, and, by my soul, you looked on as coolly as though they were both as strange to you as one of the Grand Turk's officers, and a woman of his haram."

"Have a little patience, my dear Stanza," replied Kincat—"and all the apparent mystery will be cleared up to your complete satisfaction. Do not suppose that I left the masquerade without being assured of the success of my project; or that I have acted in this business from any motive which honor would discountenance, or a due regard to my reputation would forbid. You will concur in approbation of my scheme, as soon as I shall have explained it to you. In the mean time, have confidence in me!"

The reply of Kincat was scarcely terminated, when the whole groupe reached his apartments, and on being introduced by Kincat, what was the surprize of all to behold Steeple and Sally sitting *tête-à-tête*. Lord Stanza uttered an exclamation of surprize and

pleasure blended, as Sally, rising from her chair, sprang into the arms of Kincat, and thanked him for having so effectually interfered to preserve her honor, and to cause shame and disappointment to him who had projected and attempted to accomplish her ruin by a base and cowardly stratagem.

Kincat, seeing the surprize of his friends at this agreeable rencontre, hastened to give them the explanation which was requisite to clear up the mystery. He therefore informed them of the circumstance of Sally's accidental discovery of his arrival in the metropolis, and her communication to him of the progress of Sir Henry's attempt to instil into her mind doubts of Kincat's constancy to her, and of his artifice to draw her to the masquerade.—" After I had learned the particulars of the

dresses in which Sir Henry and Sally were to appear," continued Kincat— "I lost no time in seeking, with the aid of Steeple, for some female, whose size, figure and voice, resembled those of Sally as nearly as possible; and having found one who was well adapted for my purpose, I secured her attendance on the evening of the masquerade, and having dressed her in the same character in which Sally was to appear, Steeple and myself conducted her into the scene of gaiety. It was by mere accident that I had assumed a character which furthered my object, for when I approached Sir Henry, he mistook me for some person who had engaged to perform in his plot against myself, and advancing to speak with me, left a most favourable opportunity, which Steeple happily availed himself of, to substitute the false for the true Sally; and to carry

off the latter without suspicion or obstruction to the hotel. By a private signal which Steeple made as he retired, I was assured of his success; and this will account for my carelessness as to what subsequently occurred between the baronet and his lady."

"But what sort of revenge do you mean to take of this amatory gentleman?" asked Lord Venal—"for by my honor, I think he richly deserves some severe recompense for his obtrusive gallantry; and your regard for your own character requires you to notice the insult!"

"I must adhere to the old custom, I suppose;" replied Kincat in a very careless tone—"for I cannot see how that is to be departed from: although such a rascal ought by no means to be

dealt with on the same footing as an honorable character!"

"What, fight him on equal terms?" exclaimed Lord Booby—"D—-n the rascal, let us go in a body, and souce him in some horse-pond, until we have cooled his hot blood a little. As to treating him as a man of honor, I never would put him on such a footing?"

Kincat, however, could not persuade himself that this mode recommended by Lord Booby was strictly in unison with that honorable conduct which he always endeavored to practice; for although Sir Henry, by his base attempts upon Sally, had completely excluded himself from the pale of gentlemanly treatment, Kincat felt that his revenge would be very unsatisfactory, unless it was open as the day; and the fair

result of such a personal meeting as the laws of honor warranted and even prescribed. "I consider," said he, in reply to the recommendations of his friends—"duelling as the only mode of obtaining a fair and complete satisfaction in all cases of personal insult, and therefore I feel disposed to resort to it in the present instance. Could I descend to the level of a bravo, I confess I might have the power to obtain a more certain vengeance, in as much as I should annihilate my enemy; and at less risk, because I should take from him the opportunity of defence. But the honourable mind shrinks with horror and detestation from the commission of a crime equally marked by its cruelty as its cowardice. He has indeed made a clandestine effort to assassinate my happiness, but let him answer this to God and his conscience. I would

not incur the responsibility of imitating him."

There was nothing in the sentiments of Kincat to condemn: even Venal and Booby both remained silent, and in a mood rather disposed to admire than censure the feelings which gave birth to such noble ideas. Lord Stanza, on the other hand, with all the natural ardor of his character, seized the hand of his friend Kincat, exclaiming—"By my hope of fame, my dear fellow, thou art a noble creature; and I will feel pride in telling the world thou art my friend. Thou shalt meet this villain, and I will be thy second; and if the fortune of the day should go against thee, and place thee *hors de combat*, by the mass, I will engage the rascal, and prove to him, that as he has been guilty of aggravated villainy, he

must atone for it by submitting himself to aggravated danger."

It was just at this point of the conversation that Fribble rushed into the room, with a countenance of terror which threw a general alarm throughout the whole company. In fact, the bare circumstance of his appearance, had he displayed no fright, would have been sufficient to shew that something of an extraordinary nature had occurred: for it was not probable that so quickly after the affair of the duel, and almost at the instant of Kincat's return, which, by the way, Fribble had picked up of one of the waiters, as he repaired to Sir Henry's apartment, Fribble would spontaneously thrust himself in a circle where his reception was likely to be of such an equivocal description. The

whole of the party, with one accord, rose from their seats, and a simultaneous expression of surprize burst forth from them.

As soon, however, as the first emotion of astonishment had subsided, Kincat (for Fribble was too much agitated to open his lips for the purpose of speech) with a cool tone of voice requested to be informed to what cause he had to attribute the unlooked for honor of this visit.

Fribble had made up his tale, and arranged his plan of proceeding before he came into the room, but his courage had so completely forsaken him at sight of Kincat and his party, and particularly of Sally, who cast a look of sternness upon him as he entered, that he could not find a single word to say, by way of introduc-

tion or of apology; and it was not for the space of half a minute after Kincat had put the question to him that he could sufficiently collect his thoughts for a reply. At length, however, calling a bold resolution to his aid, he answered —"Most injured of men, my conscience has prompted me to break through the bounds of good breeding in order to explain to you the conduct I have lately adopted towards you. Alas! I have been in the power of Sir Henry Priapus, in consequence of his offer to me of a thousand pounds to assist him in his schemes, and it was he who compelled me to give you the meeting in the Park, in the hope that your death would leave that lady unprotected, and in a situation to accept of his offers to her. When he found that plan fail, he projected a new scheme, invented a story of your falsehood, and prevailed upon her to accom-

pany him to the masquerade to witness his proofs; there he had procured a man to personate you, and had obtained a courtezan to toy with him, in sight of your lady; and after Sir Henry had thus convinced her of the truth of what he had advanced, he intended to make her his prize, and had gained a party of friends to accompany him to assist him in carrying her off if necessary. By some wonderful miracle, however, at the masquerade, an exchange of ladies was made, and the baronet instead of possessing the fair female he proposed thus to honor, was made happy by a girl of the town, who, contrived to get a cheque of five hundred pounds from him. Sir Henry has this moment discovered the trick put upon him, and is raving like a Bedlamite up and down his apartment, where I left him."

The groupe of friends looked at each other, as if to ask if they should give full credit to what Fribble had asserted, or merely set it down as the commencement of some new trick. Lord Stanza was the first who broke silence, for Kincat seemed perfectly disinclined to enter into any conversation with one who had taken such an active part in the hostilities carried on against him. "Pray, Mr. Fribble," quoth his lordship—"how happens it, that this compunction of yours never made its appearance, until the failure of the scheme in which you take such a part?"

Fribble was as completely pozed by this question, which his sagacity had not foreseen, as though he had been asked to solve a problem in Euclid. He blushed, a circumstance of very rare

occurrence; and stammered out an apology, more famous for its incoherence than its applicability. In fact, his perplexity and distress were so great, that after he had stuttered for a minute and a half, without producing a single connected sentence, Kincat took pity upon him, and after telling Lord Stanza that he had hit the poor penitent too hard, he addressed him—"Now answer me candidly, my good fellow, has not Sir Henry refused to pay you the stipulated reward—and is not this the true reason of your turning against him? Nay, no confusion, no hesitation; I am sufficiently acquainted with your character to be sure that self-interest is the only deity of your idolatry."

"Or," added Lord Stanza, "has Sir Henry threatened you with a horsewhipping, or a ducking, or a duel?"

And as his lordship said it, he threw an inquiring look at Fribble, which at once proved fatal to all his resolution, and threw him into a quandary ten times more perplexing than before.

Fribble, thus unmercifully attacked, determined for once in his life to act the candid part, and throw himself upon the generosity of Kincat and his friends. In fact, his own interest pointed this out to him, as by far the most politic mode of proceeding; for it must soon come out, if he denied it now, that he was engaged in another duel transaction; and that it was this affair which urged him to the measure of seeking Kincat, and laying the whole business before him. He accordingly replied—" To speak truth, my Lord Stanza, you have hit the mark; for, so convinced is Sir Henry that I have acted against him in this

business; and, indeed, that I am the author of the plot to cheat him out of his object, that he has insisted upon my meeting him early in the morning, and fighting him at the horrible distance of only three paces. So that unless I can get off this affair, you may set me down as a dead man."

There was a look of horror in Fribble's countenance as he said this, which convinced the company that there was no trick in the business, but that Fribble was indeed under the influence of the most dreadful apprehensions. Kincat, however, before he owned his own share in the business, determined to probe Fribble a little deeper; he therefore replied—" And perhaps, Mr. Fribble, Sir Henry had cause to suspect you of treachery to him. Now come, tell me the plain truth; had you not some hand in

the trick put upon him? Was it not yourself who planned and executed the escape of Sally?"

Fribble hesitated: here was an opportunity by giving an affirmative to the question of Kincat, provided he was not detected, of completely winning the esteem of the man whom he now wished as much to conciliate as he had formerly to injure. On the other hand, if he should rashly expose himself to the accusation of having told a wilful falsehood, in order to insinuate himself into the good opinion of Kincat, he felt that he should draw discredit upon every thing he said, as well as bring himself into terrible disgrace. He was therefore about to disown any participation in the scheme of extricating Sally, when some mischievous demon suggested to him that if he could im-

press Kincat with a belief that he was serving him at the moment when he was professing to promote the designs of the baronet, the former would very probably make him a present of a sum sufficient to cover the loss he had sustained through the disappointment of Sir Henry; and the bare possibility of obtaining a thousand pounds was too great to be contended against; and for this possibility, determined to run all hazards, he replied, with an assumed look of modesty, "Why, my dear sir, I am not anxious to blazon my own deeds. If I have served you, Mr. Kincat, I can never regret that I have given such a man as Sir Henry Priapus cause to condemn me!"

Lord Stanza started from his chair as he heard this new proof of Fribble's unconquerable assurance; yet amazement

and indignation had so chained his lordship's tongue, that Kincat, who had watched the movement, had time to check the torrent of his thoughts before it had burst the bounds of good breeding, and to repeat the question in rather a more decisive form.—"Then, Mr. Fribble, do you mean to tell me that it is to you I am indebted for the rescue of Sally; and that you have come hither now to receive my expressions of gratitude?"

Fribble covered his face with his hands; for he was, in truth, a little ashamed of his duplicity, and could not look his interrogator full in the face. Kincat, however, assumed to believe it modesty, and repeated the question in a tone apparently of more anxiety than before; a circumstance which gave Fribble fresh confidence, as it seemed

to assure him that Kincat really supposed that he had rescued Sally from the hands of her persecutor. With a bold air, therefore, in order to prevent the truth of his averment from being disputed—"By the piety of the pope, my dear sir, I thought some atonement due to you for the part I had taken against you, and this was my motive for preferring the dictates of my heart, to those of my head? But if I was the means of saving the lady, surely you may pardon such an act!"

Kincat could positively contain himself no longer: he had hitherto preserved an admirable equanimity; but the moment he found Fribble laying claim to the merit of emancipating Sally from the artful designs of Sir Henry, when in fact he was notoriously assisting the baronet to carry his views

into effect, he could no longer command himself sufficiently to maintain the appearance of ignorance which he had put on. Springing from his chair, in a most violent fury, with a single bound, he reached Fribble, and seizing him most violently by the collar, he shook him until he appeared to have dislocated every individual limb, accompanying the shaking with these exclamations—"Thou scurvy rascal! Thou barefaced hypocrite! Thou fellow without a grain of truth in thy whole composition! How darest thou to come into my apartments with a base falsehood at thy tongue's end to serve thee as a passport to my favor? Thou assist to extricate Sally! Why thou hast tried, by every means in thy power, to effect her ruin! Every energy thou possessest, thou hast placed at the disposal of the baronet, thy worthy counterpart and coad-

jutor; and now thou comest to me with a canting tale in thy mouth to pass thyself off as my friend! Say thy prayers, scoundrel, for now this very instant I will acquit thee of this world!"

Down dropped Fribble upon his knees, whether from the violence of Kincat's movement of him, or the overpowering force of his own feelings it matters not; but being in that abject position, while he bitterly reproached himself internally with his own egregious folly in thus defeating his own design, he audibly endeavoured to deprecate the punishment which seemed to hang over him in language of the most degrading supplication. "Lord, have mercy upon me for a fool!" quoth he—"What devil could prompt me to assume a merit which did not belong to me! Dear Mr. Kincat, pray don't anni-

hilate me. 'Pon my honor—'pon my soul, and my reputation, which is dearer to me than my soul, it is the only lie I have told you to night, or rather this morning! I swore to stick to truth, but my old habit would not leave me without getting me into one more cursed scrape! God forgive me; and pray, my dear generous sir, remember "to err is human, to forgive divine!" I have but a few hours to live, at day-break Sir Henry will kill me! Do not, for the sake of pity, do not begrudge me my little morsel of time, that I may make my will, and say my prayers, for I have a long account to settle with heaven! Good, dear Mr. Kincat, be charitable to me, and spare my bones, although I so well deserve to have them broken."

It was with the utmost difficulty that Kincat and the whole of his friends

could check the disposition to indulge in a hearty laugh at the agitation and entreaties of Fribble, who still remained on his knees, holding up both his hands in a most imploring attitude, until Kincat had recovered himself from the discomposure into which he had been thrown and had found words to answer, as he relinquished his grasp of the collar of Fribble—"Get up, thou poltroon! Thou hast no more courage in thy composition than a sparrow has in sight of a hawk! Pity stops the hand of my indignation, or I would at this moment shake thee into a mere non-entity. But tell me, thou knave, what demon could excite thee to take part in a plot against me? What had I done to thee, thou leech, that thou shouldst level thy puny malice against me?"

Kincat paused for a reply, and at

length Fribble gently murmured,—"Nothing, sir, nothing at all! It was the hope of getting the thousand pounds which Sir Henry promised me, and of which he now refuses to give me a single farthing. That was my only motive!"

"And what," said Kincat, coughing loudly, to conceal the risible inclination of all the muscles of his countenance. "What prompted thee, base fellow, to come to me with a falsehood in thy mouth, pretending that thou hadst any share in the emancipation of my Sally?"

Fribble wiped his eyes, into which tears of apprehension had rushed, as he replied—"Nothing, sir, but the hope of obtaining that sum from you which Sir Henry refused me. But I do repent me truly that I have ever had recourse to

these practices; for alas! if I am to die within a few hours, which I do believe I shall, these matters will be a very heavy load upon me, when I am leaving the world." And then Fribble sighed with such prodigious sorrow depicted upon his countenance, that Kincat was constrained to offer him his hand and raise him from the floor; at the same time, desiring him to assure himself that he freely forgave him all the injuries he had ever committed or imagined against him, and thus to ease his conscience of part of its burden, in order that if he must fall in the field, he might die with more content.

"Content!" echoed Fribble, as he raised himself.—"The Lord have mercy upon me, who ever died contented! But alas, it will be wise in me to do so, if there be no way left by which I can

make my way out of this cursed affair. Sir Henry is such a hasty, hot-headed fellow!"

"If he kill you," exclaimed Kincat —"I will revenge your death; for I have a sad and mortal account to settle with him; therefore do not be mortified at the idea that he may escape with impunity!" This was a kind of consolation, however, which although it may be well enough understood by Kincat and his friends, was altogether unintelligible to Fribble. He was obliged to make some acknowledgment, notwithstanding, for the friendship or other motive which suggested the comfort, which he accordingly did in a most awkward style—"I am vastly indebted to you, sir," quoth he, "for your kindness in offering me what you think consolation; but in sober truth, I fear it

will not much benefit me, if you kill Sir Henry after he has killed me. If, sir, you will be kind enough to kill him first, the advantage would be obvious!"

Kincat laughed heartily at the reply of Fribble, but as the latter was never less disposed to laugh in the whole course of his life, since it was obvious that he would derive no benefit from this scheme of interesting Kincat to prevent the duel, he could not enter into the joke at all; and as all the rest of the company joined Kincat in an endeavour to ridicule Fribble's fears, which he took to be so many insults upon him, it is not to be wondered at that he very shortly found himself intolerably unpleasant in their company, and contrived to withdraw himself the first moment he discovered a

favorable opportunity, after taking a leave of the whole groupe, which had no very inconsiderable effect upon his feelings, and which absolutely threw the whole groupe, who seemed bent on persecuting him, into convulsions of laughter.

By the time Fribble had quitted the groupe it was scarcely an hour short of day-break; and he determined not to lie down, but to proceed in search of some friend to see that he was not murdered; for meet Sir Henry he felt he must, or submit to the eternal apprehension of being mal-treated or murdered by the baronet, wherever he might happen to meet with him. He was therefore forced to fight, and he had just rouzed a friend from his slumbers, and prevailed upon him to go with him to

the field, when the sun, as if in mockery of Fribble's distress, rose with almost unwonted splendour, and told him that the hour of meeting was fully come.

CHAP. XVI.

Mysterious prevention of the duel, by the seizure of Sir Henry, who naturally enough suspects Fribble to be at the bottom of the affair. The baronet, bandaged and pinioned, is carried off and lodged in a dwelling in the midst of a wood, where he has ample time to form conjectures, and to enjoy his own meditations.—The arrival of a new visitor changes at once the tide of Sir Henry's suspicions, and convinces him of Fribble's innocence as to this affair.—Further adventures of Sir Henry in the hovel in the wood.—The terrors of the baronet, and his ultimate escape from the hands of his cruel tormentors.—The sequel of the affair, with a key to unlock the mystery.

FROM the moment of Fribble's departure out of the room, Sir Henry had

thought of nothing but revenge for the trick, which he was convinced had been played upon him. As to Fribble, the baronet's determination was to put him out of the way, as the first sacrifice to his insulted honor. He accordingly reached out his case of pistols, called his valet, ordered him to examine and clean them, and to call him at day-break. Then, without taking off his clothes, he threw himself upon the bed, and, without closing his eyes, passed the residue of the night in ruminating upon the singular issue of a design, upon which he had placed so much reliance, both as a matter of lust and of revenge; and upon the unknown consequences which might yet be in the womb of fate.

During this interval Sir Henry felt something like a visitation of remorse:

but it was not a penitence of legitimate origin; it was the offspring of disappointment; not of a hatred of crime. He regretted that he had trusted any one with a share in the plot, that he had not rather kept the whole affair a profound secret in his own bosom, and thus guarded against the danger of failure. He would have sacrificed half a life to obtain the object of his scheme; he was resolved to risk a whole life to revenge the fraud which had deprived him of it. Every moment found him more determined, because he encouraged no sentiment but such as was calculated to fill the measure of desperation even to an overflow; and when his valet came in the morning, he was in admirable cue for a duel.

It required no great time for Sir Henry to equip himself. He had de-

termined to go to the field alone, but scarcely had he entered the Park gate, before he was suddenly seized by three men, wrapped in huge great coats, and with masks on, who, without speaking a single word, rushed upon him from behind, and before he could find time to make any resistance pinioned his arms behind him, and carried him away to a hackney-coach which was in waiting close by the gate at which Sir Henry had entered. So confounded was he by this sudden assault, that for a few seconds, he could not speak; but the instant he had a little recovered himself from his surprize, he began to interrogate the strangers as to the cause of this ill-treatment. Robbers he could not suppose them to be, for they made no sort of attempt upon his pockets, except to take away his pistols, and at the same time putting a bandage round his eyes so as effectually to pre-

vent him from discovering the road they were about to take him, or the place whither they might carry him. His suspicions immediately pointed out Fribble as the author of this outrage, for to no other person could he reasonably attribute it, and he had not a doubt upon his mind that he had planned it in order to prevent the duel taking place, and to prevent the possibility of any fatal accident occurring to himself.

"For heaven's sake, gentlemen," cried the baronet, "let me go; for I have an affair of honor which cannot be dispensed with. If it be money you require, take all I have, and come to me, and I'll give you what you want. Who has employed you? For the love of God, tell me whether this be altogether a trick of Fribble's to get rid of an engagement of which he is confoundedly

afraid, or whether it be a plan of any unknown enemy whom I have provoked? Answer me, gentlemen; answer me at once, or I shall go distracted!"

Not a word of reply was made to the intreaty of Sir Henry; but the vehicle, after making a dozen turnings and windings in apparently opposite directions, so as completely to bewilder the baronet, in spite of all the pains he took to make himself acquainted with the direction in which he was travelling, moved on rapidly along a smooth road, while the restless captive at frequent intervals, broke out into a violent interrogatory, which, however, had not the effect of unlocking the taciturnity of his companions, and consequently was productive of no kind of information.

For about two hours the coach moved

on, and the baronet, finding it in vain to attempt to draw into a conversation any of the persons round him, began to hold colloquy with his own thoughts, and to ask himself what might be the probable motive of all this singular treatment, and what was likely to be its issue. After revolving the subject over and over in his mind, he finally found that he had gained about as much knowledge from his own speculations, as from his companions, excepting that he had convinced himself that Fribble was at the bottom of the whole transaction; and was about to get him clapped in *quod* under some pretext or another until he himself might have an opportunity of digesting some other scheme by which he might get rid of the danger and inconvenience of the duel altogether.

When the vehicle stopped, the band-

age was removed from the eyes of the baronet, and he found himself at the door of an ancient mansion, which time had terribly defaced and shattered. It was evidently capacious, and had the appearance of that species of erection which had once been honoured by the residence of rank and opulence, although the disjointed stones in many places, and its broken mortar in others, clearly bespoke the desertion by those who once tenanted it. A very thick wood spread an impervious shadow round the dwelling, so that it was utterly impossible for Sir Henry to catch a glance of any thing which could lead to a conjecture in his mind, as to where he was placed by his mysterious conductors. After casting his eyes round him, however, for a few seconds, while one of the men let down the steps and opened the door of the coach, he ventured to ask if

any one would be polite enough just to inform him where the devil he was, what business they had to bring him there, and what the devil they intended to do with him there?

The only answer he gained, and it was certainly a favour to obtain any at all, considering the silence which had heretofore prevailed, was—"You will know, in good time!" and this was every word the baronet could get from his companions. There was something in the voice which had given him this reply which struck upon the ear of Sir Henry as familiar to it. But in vain he endeavoured to connect with the tone any circumstance of time, place or person which could lead to any satisfactory result; and he was therefore compelled to submit to be kept in utter ignorance until he could either find out some mode of making

the gentry who had brought him hither a little more communicative, or until some accident might possess him of the knowledge he now sought after in vain.

One of the men rang a loud bell, and in a short time the door was opened by another person, who appeared to be the exact counterpart of the three fellows who had been the companions of the baronet's journey. Not a word passed, but Sir Henry was led into the mansion between two of his new acquaintance, and was conducted up stairs and through a long gallery, which carried about it many vestiges of ancient magnificence. At the end of this gallery, the man who preceded them, opened a door into a large room, which was well furnished, not in the most modern style, and here Sir Henry was informed that

his journey was terminated, and that he must make himself contented as well as he could, until circumstances should induce those who sent him thither to agree to his release.

"Who are they, and what is their object in sending me here?" asked the baronet; but on looking up he discovered he had been addressing his questions to the air or the furniture; for his conductors had left him in the lurch to enjoy the luxury of his own thoughts. Determined, however, to finish the sentence, before he held his tongue, Sir Henry continued—"D——me, if this be not the most queer adventure I ever met with; but whether it be the act of Fribble, or some injured woman, who has marked and watched me, and took this opportunity to revenge herself upon me for my perfidy to her, curse me if I can tell! It is to

be hoped, however, to whomsoever I am obliged for the change of air and residence, that they will not be guilty of any further rudeness to me!"

The idea of its being the act of any one of the fair sex, whom he had seduced and deserted, was only entertained for an instant, since reason suggested to him the improbability of any person of this description being privy to the affair of the duel, and, at the same time, being so well acquainted with the time and place of meeting, as to have arranged matters with such precision as to lay hold upon him at the critical nick of time when he was passing. He therefore set it down as a moral certainty that Fribble, and no other, was the person.

Confinement to a man of mind is far

from being miserable; for the moment he has brought himself to that spirit of resignation which terminates the reign of discomposure, in his own intellectual granary he will find ample food for contemplation, and abundant materials with which to employ himself and beguile the tedious hours. But to such a mind as that which Sir Henry possessed, imprisonment was a cursed bore; and although this moment he made up his mind to think it useless to repine at the hostility of fate, the very next instant, while the resolution was yet green, he was raving and stamping about the apartment, cursing fortune for a jilt, and all those who had any hand in bringing him thither as a set of villains and vagabonds, whom it would be unmerited lenity to hang. He required a continual change of pleasures to enable him to exist with any degree of tolerable comfort to himself; and

how then was he to drag on a miserable existence in this room, where there was neither pleasure nor variety of any description whatever to pass away the dull hours?

He tried the door, but it was barred against him; the old fashioned windows were nothing more than small casements through which there was no room for a human body to pass; consequently, there was no chance of Sir Henry making his escape through these means. Finding all hope of emancipation by door or window excluded, the next employment of the baronet was to search the apartment from one side to the other to seek for some aperture or opening, and after some little search he discovered a door which gave way to his touch, but the infant hope which this discovery created in his bosom was speedily de-

stroyed when he perceived that this door merely led into another room similar to the one he occupied, and beyond which there was no apparent passage to any further part of the mansion.

Twenty-four hours sufficed to make the baronet completely outrageous in his prison: the only kind of amusement in which he could indulge was that of climbing up to the casement, and taking a peep at the surrounding wood; and as his window commanded the road which led up to the mansion, he was occasionally gratified by the view of a human being. It was on the day after his arrival just at its close, when the rays of the sun threw a setting splendor over the surrounding foliage, a coach appeared driving up the avenue, at the same furious rate as that with which he had been conveyed thither. The win-

dows were up, and the baronet could not distinguish the faces within the vehicle; but in less than a quarter of an hour his attention was powerfully attracted by a noise in the adjoining apartment, to which he had erroneously supposed there was no entrance except through his own chamber. He advanced cautiously, and endeavoured to look through the key-hole, but could only distinguish a man in a great coat, who was employing himself in fastening up a casement immediately opposite the door. Soon afterwards the noise entirely ceased, and Sir Henry listening, heard a faint moaning, which made him instantly conclude that some fellow prisoner had been just brought in, in the same way with himself, and he determined to make an effort to hold some little communication with him if it were practicable.

Fortunately for his purpose the intermediate door betwixt the apartments had been left open, so that it gave way the moment it was touched by Sir Henry, who, *sans ceremonie*, wisely concluding that formality was altogether useless between persons in such a melancholy situation, bolted into the room, and advancing towards the spot where the stranger was sitting in a sullen posture, hailed him, when what could exceed his surprize to see in his fellow prisoner no other person, than the man whom of all others, he had selected to fix his suspicion on, even poor Fribble himself!

The two captives stared at each other with equal astonishment for some minutes before either of them found a tongue. Sir Henry, however, did Fribble the justice, before a word was ex-

changed between them, to acquit him of the charge, which in his own mind, he had previously substantiated against him; and, at the same time, he found all the anger he had previously felt, very much abate; as it was superseded by an inclination to become communicative, with a view to obtain some information on the subject of their joint imprisonment. Fribble, on the other hand, was as much confounded, but the prevailing passion in his breast was fear; for the instant he beheld himself in the company of Sir Henry, his terrors came upon him with all their original force, and for a moment suspended the operation of his faculties.

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Sir Henry, as he looked earnestly at Fribble—"Then it is no trick of yours, Mr. Fribble, which has placed me in this delicate pre-

dicament. I have charged you most vehemently with the offence, but I suspect yôu no longer, now that I see you in the same situation. But pray give me some clue to unravel this mystery, for by the Lord, I never was more completely pozed to find out any thing in my life than to get at this secret. How the devil came you here? Pray give me an answer to that question?"

Fribble breathed afresh at the unexpected kindness of the baronet's tone, which conveyed to him the assurance that the affair of the duel was terminated, and that he had only to get out of his present scrape to be able to resume his usual station and character in the *haut ton.* Being resolved that nothing on his own part should be wanting to perfect the excellent change in Sir Henry's manner towards him, he im-

mediately replied, although a certain painful sensation came across his mind as he recalled the circumstance of the proposed duel—"My dear Sir Henry, to say truth, I hardly know I came here. I went out very early yesterday morning to procure a friend to accompany me on the affair with you, and having met with him, and settled all the preliminary matters away we walked to the Park. As we entered the gate, my friend stayed behind me for some purpose or other, to which I suppose he is indebted for his escape; for while I was alone, a couple of men laid hold of me, and led me off, without so much as saying "by your leave"—or "I beg your pardon;" or any other syllable. They crammed me into a coach, blinded me, and conveyed me to some place, I supposed it to be about half a dozen miles from town, where I was detained "in

durance vile," the whole day and night, without being able to get a single syllable out of any body I saw, except that they had no intention to put me to death if I behaved myself quietly. I could look out of my window, but was effectually prevented from escaping by it, in consequence of the sash being nailed down, and a large iron bar being fixed across it, which rendered it impossible to make any exit by that way. As I sat, however, looking out, on a sudden I fancied some of the scenery was very familiar to me, and presently I recollected that I was near Tottenham. This discovery gave me some delight, and when the man who had attended on me, brought my breakfast, I could not refrain from asking him why I was brought to Tottenham.—"The devil!" quoth the fellow, in as surly a tone as possible: and dropped into a fit of

thoughtfulness which, I apprehended, boded no good to me. Without, however, informing me of the nature or result of his cogitations, or even condescending to make any more explicit reply to my question, old Cerberus after a few minutes pause, turned upon his heel and marched out of the room. In about an hour he returned with another person as gruff and ill-bred as himself, who asked me who it was that told me I was at Tottenham? I replied that no one had told me, but that I knew it myself, the landscape from my window being familiar to me. He appeared to disbelieve the assertion that I had found it out of my own knowledge, and as I persisted in the same answer he merely observed—"At any rate we will change the scene, and take him to keep company with the other gunpowder youth!" A few hours after-

wards, before I had found out what meaning to attach to all these mysterious circumstances, two men came into my room, and with as much ceremony as usually marked their proceedings, bound a handkerchief round my eyes, and leading me out of the house, clapped me into a coach, and drove away with me at a devil of a rate until I was almost tired to death, without deigning to speak a word to me on any subject I started, and thus they continued till they brought me to this place."

Here Fribble ceased his tale, and considering himself fairly entitled to a similar demand from Sir Henry, he requested in turn a reciprocation of confidence; to which the baronet replied by giving an account of the manner of his seizure, &c. with which the reader is

very well acquainted before, and as soon as he had concluded, his auditor, after an exclamation of—"good heaven, how singular that we both should be taken, and caged in the same way!" continued —"Now I'll be bound for it, Sir Henry, that I am completely up to the thing! I see it all from bottom to top as clearly as I see you there! The Bow-street officers have laid their hands on us to prevent this duel from taking place; and as they know you, Sir Henry, to be a man of property, they think to make a good thing both of you and myself before they consent to set us at liberty! Why, Lord bless you, Sir Henry, I have heard such tales of these fellows as are enough to make one's very hair stand an end; and I should not a bit wonder if they were to cut our throats, without judge or jury, if

we hesitate to agree to whatever terms they may think it proper to offer us!"

Sir Henry could not refrain from a hearty laugh at Fribble's sagacity, which had settled in a few moments a point which he felt he could not have decided in a century, without some better clue than his own intuitive powers. After this was over, however, he declared his opinion that no police officer would have the hardihood to have recourse to such a sketch of power as that of imprisoning individuals for his own purpose, and by no other warrant than his own will and pleasure, but that the circumstances which had befallen them must be traced to some other origin, which they had at present no means of finding out—"but by heaven," added Sir Henry, in a tone of fury which put

Fribble into a terrible fright; "only let me once escape from their clutches, and I will spare neither money nor exertion to get at the bottom of the affair!"

"By the Lord," answered Fribble, looking round the apartment very fearfully—"I would not have any other person even hear that speech for a trifle! Why, Sir Henry, that threat of your's is enough to doom us both to certain death, as sure as my name is Fribble!"

"No, no," quoth Sir Henry—"our lives are safe enough! Such an act as the seizure of us without giving us the opportunity of fighting for it, was the act of a coward, and no coward will touch our lives: the laws of our country will effectually protect us from such an issue!"

"Then God bless the laws and the law makers!" sighed Fribble—"for if they do I shall have a better opinion of the laws than ever I had before. But by all the saints, it would please me well just to know how long we are to remain in our present quarters; for although, truth to tell, I get better fed by these unknown gentlemen than I am when placed upon board wages by myself, yet after all I think it is better to starve in the open air, and in full possession of one's liberty, than it is to fare sumptuously and to get fat in a prison!"

Before Sir Henry could make any sort of reply to the exclamations of his fellow prisoner, the door which divided the apartments was suddenly thrown open, and two men appeared, the same who were accustomed to attend the

baronet. On seeing their captives in apparent consultation together, they frowned, and one of them, advancing to the baronet, took him roughly by the arm, and led him back to his own chamber, exclaiming in a rough and evidently assumed tone of voice—"So, you must lay your heads together, eh? But we'll have no plotting here!"

With a view to move the fellow to something more approaching to civility in his manner, Sir Henry put his hand into his pocket, and taking out half a guinea, replied as he offered him the bribe—"Here, my good fellow, take this, and relax a little in your stern demeanor. What harm can we do by a little conversation together? It beguiles the tediousness of the time, and we cannot escape by means of it. Come, come, don't be surly, but take this

trifle, and I'll double it if you tell us who sent us here, and what is the object of our confinement!"

The fellow replied with a rough laugh, and then added—" I'll tell you what, Sir Henry, conversation between prisoners is not allowable; for it leads to schemes, and schemes may lead to escapes! Not that there is any great danger of your escape, for we are pretty vigilant over you. Then as to your half a guinea, you may put it in your pocket again, for it has no power to make me blab, where I have a commission to be secret. No, no, my buck, you will never pick up a single scrap of information from me, if you stay here these twenty years or more!"

" Twenty years or more!" echoed Fribble, who caught the termination of

the sentence, as the fellow was about to close the door which divided the apartments—" What the devil, do you mean to keep us locked up in this cursed place for such a length of time as twenty years?"

" Can't tell!" answered the loquacious turnkey, for such he was in fact, if not by profession, and at the same time, closing the door, locked and bolted it securely, while poor Fribble left to his own contemplations, began to soliloquize upon his situation: " well," quoth he, in an audible tone, " whether this, after all, will turn out preferable to the duel affair, I cannot determine: but I am almost ready to wish the rascals who seized us had left us to fight it out. Twenty years! Let me see, I am now about forty, although I never pass in

public for above thirty, and another twenty years will make cruel havoc in my life. Oh Lord! I might have been as well shot yesterday, as be immured in this place for the residue of my days. Methinks I hear Lady Squeak say to her lap-dog—"Dear me, Cæsar, what can have happened our dear Mr. Fribble? I protest I have not seen him the Lord knows when! And Lady Rake knows nothing of him; and Sir John Lathe knows not a tittle about him; and he has not dined nor shewn his face at Colonel Waterhouse's for this age or more. Why surely the dear, agreeable creature cannot have made his exit." And then poor Cæsar will whine, and look up in his mistress's face, with a glance of sorrow, and wag his tail with wonder; all my friends will bewail their dear lost Fribble:" and so strong was the

impression on his mind that he could not help asking seriously if he was dead or alive?

Sir Henry, in the mean time, was not less busy with his own thoughts. After the man had led him back to his room, and placed refreshment on his table, as he had done on Fribble's, he left him to himself, without condescending to utter a single syllable in reply to the host of interrogatories and the multiplied bribes which he offered to him; and the baronet then began to cogitate most dismally upon all the circumstances of his imprisonment. In vain did he tax his invention to discover some mode of escape; his invention was beggared, and he was compelled to relinquish the fruitless effort, and to conclude that submission to the fate in

store for him, whatever that might be, was all which was left to him. This conclusion, however, plunged him into deep melancholy: the unprincipled villain can never be in worse company than his own thoughts; the moment they find him alone, they fasten upon him, and in spite of his strongest efforts to extricate himself from them, persevere in tormenting him, until he flies to some desperate remedy, and purchases a transient relief at the expence of health and sanity of mind. In his present stormy situation, Sir Henry had no remedy to fly to! the exhilarating wine was now beyond his reach, he could not therefore call in its aid to drown the reflection which caused him anguish, nor to create a feverish and dangerous elevation of spirits for the moment. The lip of beauty was no longer before him, inviting him to that soft dalli-

ance, which while it calls the mind from the grasp of care for a time, enervates and lays the basis of destruction. He was alone, and his thoughts commenced a bitter hostility with his peace, until worn down by fatigue, he sank on his pillow in restless slumber.

The following day, the third of their captivity, had nearly arrived at its close; for the third time, Sir Henry had watched the evening rays reflected from the oaks which encompassed the mansion, when a sudden noise in the passage which led to his apartment, attracted his attention, and excited in his bosom a strange and strong conflict of "hopes, doubts and fears!" He listened for a few moments; but no longer time was allowed him for surmise, before the door of his room was opened, and the same three individuals who had brought him

into this abode appeared again before him. Hope re-appeared with them; but it was chastened by the uncertainty of the subsequent measures they might adopt, even supposing they rescued him from his present confinement. Without saying a word, the taciturn trio bandaged the eyes of the baronet, and pinioned his arms as before; and then led him away between them to a vehicle which stood at the door of the mansion, into which they hurried him, and then drove off with rapidity; but in less than half an hour the carriage stopped at a small hovel, when the handkerchief was taken from Sir Henry's eyes once more.

It was now evident to the baronet that some new drama was about to be acted in which he was to be a performer; for the interior of the dwelling, if

dwelling it might be called, was eminently fitted for deeds of night. It was merely a single room, lighted from two diminutive casements, which were near the roof, and which admitted scarcely light enough to render the objects it contained discernible. Into this apartment Sir Henry was ushered, and received by another man of the same cast as those who conducted him thither. It was now for the first time that any one of the party shewed the slightest disposition to enter into conversation, and now, the same individual whose voice had before appeared to be familiar to the ear of the baronet, addressed him—" Sir Henry, you have been a notorious seducer, and great numbers of female victims, who have been sacrificed to your libidinous desires demand an exemplary punishment upon him who has been the cause of their ruin. I am appointed to

fulfil their wishes, and to deal out to you that measure of punishment which will in some degree, be proportioned to your demerits. I leave you to guess the nature of the sentence which is to be executed upon you at this moment, and which will deprive you of the power of causing any further wretchedness to the sex which it is the first duty and privilege of man to protect."

Here the man paused, and Sir Henry began at length to see the full extent of his punishment, and a crude suspicion rushed across his mind, that his affair with Sally was the cause of this proceeding. If so, with whom did the whole affair originate, for it was clear that Fribble had nothing to do with the circumstance, since he had been the sharer of his captivity; and he began to repent, as these ideas suggested them-

selves to his mind, that he had acted with such precipitation towards one, who, perhaps, after all which had passed was like himself, the dupe of some schemer more cunning than either of themselves.

He had not much time, however, for those reflections; for almost as soon as the man had finished speaking, assisted by the others, he proceeded to those actions which sufficiently shewed that he was serious in the resolution he had held out. Sir Henry, therefore, desiring them, in a determined voice, to stand off, made a reply to the apparent leader of the groupe. "I know not by whose authority you are sanctioned and protected in this business, but I beg to caution you not to carry your zeal for any one to such lengths as may bring yourselves into alarming scrapes.

Mark my words; I will resist you until death, and all the consequences which may ensue will be upon yourselves! Whoever it is, that has employed you, he is nothing better than an abject coward, or he would have met me fairly in the field, and stood his chance as to the issue. If he dare to do that, take him my bold defiance; but have a care how you proceed in any business which may endanger your own neck, and the necks of all who may be concerned with you. If you lay hands upon me, to offer me injury, I pledge my honor to pursue you, one and all, to the utmost extremity of the rigour of the law."

This menace was replied to by the unknown, in a style of carelessness, which proved that it failed to produce the effect intended by the baronet, so far, at least, as regarded him. "Sir Henry," quoth

the man—"You may keep your threats to yourself, for they will do you but very little good. The laws which you have so often violated, only want to be set in motion to overwhelm you. Be cautious how you shew yourself in a court of justice. As to myself, I am perfectly indifferent about the consequences, so that we carry into execution the sentence against you."

But although the leader of the groupe assumed this indifference of tone and manner on the subject, there was a palpable hesitation among the rest of the party, which revived the hopes and spirits of Sir Henry, and determined him to follow up this incipient success with a vigour which should ensure him the victory. "My lads," said he, in a tone of kindness—"You are doubtless moved by interest to take part against me. Tell

me how much my enemies have offered you for your share in the transaction, and depend upon me, I'll double your reward, be it as high as it will."

The party moved towards the door, and seemed to confer together in a whisper, during which Sir Henry, whose ear was strained to catch any word which might have tendency to throw light upon the mystery, distinguished the name of "Stanza" pronounced by the man who seemed to be the leader of the whole. This magic word was a clue to the whole affair, for it instantly rushed across the baronet's recollection that the voice which had so forcibly struck him was none other than the voice of Lord Stanza's valet, who had frequently brought him messages. The baronet instantly felt convinced that Lord Stanza and Kincat were the persons who had out-

wifted him, and that poor Fribble was totally innocent of the whole transaction. How to make use of this discovery, to prevent the completion of the plot against him, was the baronet's next consideration. There was nothing like a bold effort, in a desperate case: as soon, therefore, as he saw they had terminated their consultation, he began again. "Come, come, I know you well, and I know your employers! Do you suppose I can be ignorant of the enmity borne against me by Lord Stanza and his friend Kincat? You have agreed to sell yourselves to the commission of an act of villainy; now be it your boast, that you repented before it was too late, and by an exposure of the whole affair, prevented a deed, the awful consequences of which must fall exclusively, and with a fatal weight upon yourselves!"

"Swear to us, Sir Henry, by all that is sacred, that you will not again shew yourself in public in London, for these six months, until we have had time to get over the affair to our employers, and we will consent to let you go; but we will receive no reward. We only ask of you, that you will not injure us by causing this unauthorized lenity of ours to come to the ears of those who have the power to ruin us. In six months, the affair will be forgotten, and we should have less reason to fear the result of our treachery being made public. Swear to us as we wish, and you are safe!"

This proposition was made by the man whom Sir Henry had recognized by his voice, and the baronet after considering a few moments, determined that it would be better to accede to it than

to run any risks as to the result of his refusal. As to his banishment from town for six months, he felt it would be quite consonant to his inclinations, since he was well aware that the news of his affair with Kincat's *protegée* and the subsequent adventure, must by this time have become the subject of universal conversation at the West End of the town ; and as he was very averse to being made the subject of ridicule, he cared not how long a time elapsed before he shewed his face in the fashionable world again. As soon, therefore, as he had weighed these matters in his mind, he replied, "well, be it as you desire. I swear to you by all that is sacred, never to do you any injury by appearing in town for six calendar months to come. But by the way, my good fellows, you have not let me into the secret of this plot, respecting which I should wish to obtain as

much information as possible. Come, give me the whole history of the thing, and depend upon my honor, I will be most liberal in the remuneration I shall offer for your services."

The offer of the baronet produced no effect; the only answer he got was, "Sir Henry, think yourself well off that you escape without further injury or molestation, and do not stay to ask another question. The road through the wood lies on the left, you cannot mistake it, and it will lead you to a village close by, where you will find immediate conveyance to any part of the world. But remember, Sir Henry, we rely on your honor, and should you deal dishonorably with us, you will have to experience to what lengths the despair of men can drive them. More information you will never be able to obtain from us!"

Sir Henry was obliged to remain content with the little he had discovered; and being in no disposition to remove the good impression he had made upon the fellows by any imprudent and vexatious inquiries, he threw a purse among them, and made the best of his way out of the house, and as there was just sufficient left of the day, to direct him out of the wood, he reached the village in safety, and about ten o'clock at night arrived safely at a small tavern in the city, where he determined to remain for a day or two, until he had arranged his matters privately, so as to enable him to quit the metropolis.

It may appear singular that a man of Sir Henry's character, so notoriously perjured in all his transactions with the female sex, and such a general reprobate in his conduct, should feel any dispo-

sition to keep his word with three or four obscure individuals, of no weight or importance in point of character. But the fact is, that a thousand instances are to be found of men, who, with the most loose and depraved general habits, encourage certain abstract notions of honor, to which they adhere with a tenacity which would be highly honourable to them if directed to better objects. It is probable that some such principle as this might have actuated Sir Henry's conduct in this instance; or if he had no scruples upon the point of honor, perhaps he was deterred from a breach of the verbal covenant into which he had entered, by a feeling of apprehension lest the unknown groupe which had administered the obligation to him, and given him at parting such an expressive menace, in case of any breach of his word, should be on the look out to

detect him; and in the event of catching hold of him, should take care that he did not make his escape from them so easily as he had done before. One or other of these motives, it may be charitable to suppose the better of the two, certainly operated as a check upon the baronet, and effectually kept his tongue within his teeth, and prevented him from popping his head, at least as long as the day lasted, out of the tavern where he had taken up his quarters, until his valet, for whom he had sent privately, could settle his business in town for him.

But it may be well to return to Fribble: at the very same hour, and within a few minutes after the carrying off of Sir Henry, the two men who had brought Fribble, made their appearance once more in his apartment; and at the

sight of them, so impressed was he with the idea that they came for the purpose of doing him some grievous bodily harm, if not to put an end to his existence, that he instantly dropped upon his knees, to the great merriment of his keepers, and began to recite his prayers with all the power imaginable, intreating of heaven not to cut him off in the very prime of his days, but to suffer him to remain long enough in the world to pay all his just debts, to take his leave of a few particular friends, and to have the consolation of surviving a woman, whom, from the bottom of his heart, he most cordially detested. The fellows laughed most heartily at the earnestness of Fribble's manner, and assured him, after suffering him to torment himself for a short time, that he need entertain no apprehensions for his personal safety, for that they were merely instructed

to convey him to the place whence they had taken him, and there to give him his liberty, and leave him to shift for himself.

From the extreme of grief and despair, Fribble rose, in an instant, to the excess of joy and hope. Unable to restrain his transports, he clasped the fellows in his arms, and hugging them rapturously, honoured them with the most endearing appellations, and vowed they were the best hands at a hoax that ever he had met with. More than once he was on the point of putting his hand into his pocket, to give them some money, but as often he recollected himself in time to stay his hand, and save his credit from ridicule. With the utmost cheerfulness, he submitted himself to be bandaged, in order that he might not be able to tell the

place whither he had been carried; and so much did his affability work upon the fellows in whose custody he was conveyed, that they became unusually communicative, and in reply to his questions as to what had been done with the baronet, told him without hesitation the purpose for which he had been taken away to a hovel in a remote corner of the wood: and Fribble, who had not forgiven Sir Henry for breaking his word to him with respect to the thousand pounds, was burning with impatience to reach town, in order that he might revenge himself upon the treacherous and hot-headed baronet, by giving instant and general circulation to the tale which he had just picked up, and which he had no doubt, would be a powerful recommendation of its messenger to the good opinion of Mr. Kincat.

During the whole of this journey, which took but a short time in the performance, Fribble's thoughts were of a very different description to what they were when he went over the ground again. Yet more than once, his fears took the alarm, and his heart misgave him, lest his conductors should have merely put a trick upon his credulity, after all, with a view to make him submit with more readiness, while they conducted him to some more severe punishment than the imprisonment from which he was now journeying. When this idea took possession of his mind, he became on a sudden gloomy; but the assurances of his companions, whom he interrogated over and over again on the subject, speedily produced the effect of re-assuring him, and about half an hour before mid-night, to his great joy, he was set down at Park-lane.

Never during the whole of his existence had Fribble felt more happy than he did at the moment he found himself standing once more in London, without a fetter or a guard; and the sound of the watchman hoarsely bawling "half past eleven," was sweeter music to his ear than the notes of Drouet and Nicholson. For some minutes he stood still to inhale the air of liberty, and his courage rose so high as he walked homewards, that he was half disposed to knock down any person he met. In fact, he expressed his joy in such a loud ditty as he wandered towards the hotel, that more than once, he was warned by the guardians of the night to conduct himself with propriety, lest he should perchance find a lodging in the watch-house; a warning which at length produced the desired effect, and

corrected the excessive exuberance of his happiness.

As he entered the hotel, Fribble accidentally encountered Steeple, and the latter no sooner recognized him, than with a very significant look, he invited him into Kincat's apartments, where a party which had dined there still remained to close the evening. Fribble did not need much intreaty to induce him to accept the offer, for he was so full of the tale of Sir Henry's disaster, that he felt certain the news he should carry would make him one of the most welcome guests at Kincat's table. He accordingly accepted the invitation, whispering, in a tone of triumph to Steeple as they went along the passage, "By Saint Peter, I have such a dish of news for Mr. Kincat and his lady as will make them take three or four extra

bumpers to-night, or they have not that hatred for Sir Henry Priapus, nor that wish for revenge upon him for his wickedness, that I have!"

Steeple made no reply, but smiled with a meaning which Fribble neither understood, nor took any trouble to understand; for indeed he was too much engrossed with his own thoughts to pay much attention to the looks of Steeple. All his fashionable friends had again condescended to pass in review before his imagination, no longer arrayed in sable weeds, and doleful countenances, but decked out in the gay livery of happiness. A thousand plans had as usual rushed across his brain; and if he could by any means persuade Kincat to favor him with the money which Sir Henry had promised to give him, he was as well persuaded

that in two or three years he should sport the finest equipage, and the most splendid mansion in the metropolis, as that he was at that moment walking in Fladong's hotel.

And were it not for such dreams of futurity, what remedy would thousands and tens of thousands find for that most troublesome enemy of human happiness—*ennui?* How would the man of no mind employ his hours, or render life tolerable, if he were not allowed to draw upon his imagination to supply the deficiencies in his understanding? Where would the speculator find food upon which to thrive? It is certain that the fashionable world exhibits innumerable specimens of individuals, who like Fribble, drag on existence by spunging upon families for their daily meals, and tax their own inventions to

produce, or spend all their mornings to collect funds of slanderous anecdote with which to recompence those who cater for and feed them. These may properly be denominated houses of entertainment, and they differ from hotels merely as to the mode of payment for what they furnish, for both generally depend upon a regular set of customers for their support.

CHAP. XVII.

The effect produced by the re-appearance of Fribble —A few circumstances tending to explain the mystery of the adventure recited in the last chapter, both to Fribble and to the reader—The tale draws near to a conclusion, and the interest necessarily becomes weak—Something like a winding up. in which the various characters alluded to in the progress of the work are brought upon the carpet, and disposed of in the manner in which the occurrences actually took place.

THE moment Fribble made his appearance, a general smile ran through the company, which he was far from attributing to its proper cause; for he was much more disposed to con-

sider it as a smile of pleasure, because the gloomy anticipation he had expressed at their last meeting, the evening before the proposed duel, had not been fulfilled, than to any other circumstance. "Ah, Fribble," cried Kincat, holding out his hand to his new visitor—"What the devil has taken you away for the last three days? I have been afraid that the baronet and you had not only cut each other's throats, but had absolutely finished the business by throwing yourselves into the river, since no mortal eye seems to have caught a glimpse of you since you left us here the other night. As for Sir Henry, I can't find him to challenge him."

"And if he have got any shame or grace left in him," quoth Fribble, "you will never find him more except like old Abelard, in some d——d gloomy

monastery or other! Why, zounds, my dear sir, there has been the devil to pay since I was here before." And then Fribble related all the circumstances which had taken place, embellished with such additions as his imagination suggested by way of improvement of the effect: and, during the recital, Kincat and his friends had the utmost difficulty to refrain from laughing; although, at the same time, they affected countenances of astonishment blended with solemnity, as he went through the detail of his sufferings, and seemed to be moved by a sympathy as unaffected as it was sincere. In the midst of his tale, however, a rap at the door was heard, and the visitors being desired to come in by Kincat, the very identical men who had carried away Fribble, and conducted him back again about an hour ago, made their appearance, in pre-

cisely the same dresses, but with their masks and hats in their hands, when to his utter amazement and confusion, Fribble, after looking a moment in their faces, discovered them to be no other than the valets of Lord Stanza, Kincat, and Lord Booby, who had been so completely metamorphosed, that until this moment, he never once suspected their real names.

Kincat and his friends perceived that Fribble recognized his persecutors in the individuals who had thus unexpectedly and unwelcomely intruded themselves; for they would have willingly made some sacrifice to prevent such a developement at this moment. Since it had taken place there was no alternative but to put as good a face as possible upon the affair; and, as it would be absurd to make any further attempt

to deceive Fribble, as to who were the authors of the trick, merely to laugh it off, as nothing more nor less than an excellent joke.

"Now, tell us candidly," said Kincat—"has it turned out any thing worse than the duel might have done? Supposing now that this was nothing more than a scheme of your friends to save at once your honor and your life; and to inflict upon Sir Henry a punishment in some degree adequate to his villainy? In that case, Fribble, would you not feel under eternal obligations to those friends? Depend upon it, the duel would have ended fatally had you met, and you, long before this time, would have been"———

"God bless your soul, don't mention it!" interrupted Fribble—"the bare idea

of where I might have been frightens me absolutely out of my life! But surely, you don't mean to say, Mr. Kincat, that you had any hand in this scheme? Yet, now I think on't, it must be so! Your valets! Oh, I see it all as clear as the sun at noon; and an excellent plan it was, upon my honor; and most excellently it has ended." And then Fribble laughed most heartily, and intreated to be informed of all the particulars respecting the scheme.

"Why the plan originated with me," said Lord Stanza—"I saw your terrors at the idea of the danger into which you were about to be plunged by the impetuosity of Sir Henry; and, as soon as you had left us, I struck upon a plan which seemed calculated to serve all my purposes: to revenge myself upon Sir Henry; to promote the same desire of

vengeance in the bosom of Kincat; and to secure your safety. I had lately purchased an old mansion a few miles from town, and it occurred to me that if I could convey you both thither, and keep you close prisoners for a day or two, and then devise some scheme to send Sir Henry back into the country, ashamed and mortified, all my purposes would be answered. Immediately I suggested my scheme to Lord Booby and Kincat, and they readily came into it; and our valets were instantly instructed in the parts they had to perform, and provided with dresses, and ordered to intercept you in your progress to the scene of action. They executed their parts with great skill, and complete success, and while we were at breakfast we received information that Sir Henry was safely lodged in the old mansion to which I had directed him to be carried; but by

some misunderstanding, they had taken you to a small house belonging to an old steward of mine in a different direction. There I determined to leave you, since you had been taken thither, but I very soon received information that you had found out the name of the place in which you were imprisoned; and, fearful that this discovery might lead to others, of more importance, and tend to blow my whole scheme, and expose myself, I ordered that you should be removed to the place where your antagonist was shut up, and that he should be taken to a remote keeper's hut in another part of the forest, and completely terrified into an agreement to banish himself from the metropolis at the least, for six calendar months to come. Such is the statement of the whole of the circumstances connected with this adventure, which I am sure, has

caused yourself and the baronet as much apprehension as though you had been engaged in a dozen duels, and every one of them of the same desperate description."

Fribble professed himself highly pleased with the scheme, but, in a few moments, after taking time to digest the affair, he began to feel a little disconcerted by the reflection that admirable as the joke had seemed at first, it was not a thing to be lightly passed over that he should have been shut up for three days, and subjected to the most excruciating torments, without being let into the secret before hand. Lord Stanza, however, who had observed the rising discontent in Fribble's breast, and had been prepared for it, met it most effectually by exclaiming—" The baronet, my dear fellow, promised you a

handsome recompence for your services to him, of which you can no longer entertain any hope. Suppose we make you some compensation for the loss? I will begin a private subscription for you by putting down my twenty pounds, and you can pick up a hundred at the same rate of contribution, you will double the sum originally proposed to you by Sir Henry, and thus find out that you have no reason to repent the quarrel which has taken place between you, and which indeed led to this recent adventure."

If Fribble had been in fifty times as much trouble of mind as he was now plagued with, this proposition would have proved an effectual remedy for his dullness. Not a single idea of mortification or disappointment remained in his thoughts; but a burst of happiness opened to fancy such a vast field of spe-

culation, that he could no longer controul his fancy, or even retain a sufficient recollection of himself, to speak his thanks in any connected strain. "Is it possible, my lord!" cried he—"Can your lordship really mean to stand my friend, in such an essential manner? Zounds, I shall go distracted with delight! Well, I declare, when I first read your lordship's beautiful poetry, I directly knew your lordship to be one of the most well-bred, polite, feeling, gentlemen the world could possibly produce."

"And I," said Kincat, "will give twenty more, and Sally here, by way of shewing that she feels no resentment in consequence of your joining in a conspiracy against her, she will put down an equal sum."

"Bless your kindness and her generosity!" exclaimed Fribble. "Three times twenty will make sixty! Sixty pounds! Why I shall not be without a shilling in my pocket again for at least these six months! I shall be able to make my fortune rapidly; I will go to *rouge et noir*, and play the safe game, and then I shall clear, heaven knows what!"

"I will give you twenty more!" cried Lord Booby—"And I also!" cried Sir Abraham. "Bravo! A hundred pounds!" shouted Fribble—"Tol de rol lol! Tol de rol rol! Tol de rol tiddle de tol de rol lol!" And then he began to dance round the room, cutting such capers as displayed pretty evidently the effect which had been produced upon his mind by the contributions of

his groupe of friends, and excited no small merriment amongst the whole party, excepting my Lord Venal, who sat gloomy and silent playing with his thumbs.

"And what do you mean to contribute, my Lord Venal?" asked Kincat, who read his reply sufficiently plain in his lordship's looks before he received any verbal answer, but was determined to make him commit himself as far as he possibly could.

Lord Venal hummed, and in a solemn tone made reply—"I always consider before I join any plan of this kind, what good effect is likely to result from my bounty, and whether the person asking is worthy of relief! I know very little of Mr. Fribble, and what little I do know has but little tendency to make

me very generous towards him. Besides, to what use does he mean to apply it? If he will engage to go into some business, and suffer his money to be laid out by a committee selected out of the subscribers, I may have no objection to contribute a one pound note, which is more than I ever gave at once; for I defy the world to find my name in any of the subscription lists to your Spanish patriots, or English poor, or to your Waterloo affair! No, no, it occurs to me that when once you encourage and establish a system of mendicity in a state, you take away all its independence of spirit, and pave the way for misery and ruin. I am no friend of this false charity. Idlers should be made to work, and by their labour, should obtain the provision they need."

Fribble looked glum, but he had

plenty of advocates, for no sooner did Lord Venal make known the illiberality of his sentiments, than every other individual at the table was eager to commence an attack upon him. Lord Stanza led the way, as he had led the subscription. "My lord," said he—"I cannot but admire your stoical indifference with regard to the sufferings of those around you! Were all mankind of your opinion, we should soon have an end put to beggary, for all the poor would be starved! You seem also to have mistaken this matter altogether. Mr. Fribble asked for nothing. The subscription was a suggestion of mine; and with respect to your lordship's tirade about character and merits and advantages, and such nonsense, it has nothing at all to do with the business. Allow me, however, to assure your lordship, that if I could even remove all

the objections you start so as to induce you to put down your pound note, I should think it my duty to refuse such a liberal evidence of your bounty; for he who gives so sparingly should bestow what he does in such a manner as to promote his own gratification."

"As to myself," said Steeple, before Lord Venal could find time to give his reply, "I have spent all my patrimony; and with every disposition to be a complete spendthrift, have scarcely a pound to spend. But by the mass, I have the heart of a prince, and to shame my Lord Venal, if such a thing will shame him, I will put down a twenty pound note, if I make my taylor give me an additional twelvemonth's credit, for I should like to see poor Fribble once more in a way to do a little good for himself, in what way he likes."

"You need not take such a very expensive mode to shame me," cried Lord Venal, with as cool a tone of voice as if no person had commenced an attack upon him—"It will do you more service to keep your twenty pounds and hand it over to your taylor, or he may sue out a writ against you, which may subject you to much trouble and inconvenience. As for me, my money is certainly at my own disposal; and I am neither responsible to you nor to my Lord Stanza for its application, nor shall I be anxious for your advice!"

"Your lordship is privileged, and may not be arrested," returned Steeple, with a satirical grin upon his countenance—"So that your taylor stands a still worse chance of his money than mine does. I hope, however, your lordship's honesty is equal to your charity!"

"If you were a gentleman," quoth Lord Venal, rising from his seat in a tremendous rage, "I should answer you in a different manner to what I do now, when I tell you to your face, that you are nothing better than a scoundrel, living upon the ruin of honest tradesmen —a man of no good principle whatever, whose oath is not worth a farthing in a court of justice—who stands accused of all the crimes which make a man detestable both in law and morality, and who would, to gain his ends, rush into every extreme of turpitude."

However truly his lordship might have sketched the character of Steeple, it was by no means consistent that such harsh language should grate upon the ears of the latter, who, blinded by excessive fury, seemed disposed to violate the rules of good breeding as well as good

order, and give his lordship a *milling*, in spite of his rank and wealth. Kincat, however, had marked the progress of the storm which was rising in Steeple's breast, and at the moment when the latter made a violent movement, the evident object of which was to commence hostilities, Kincat recalled him to his seat, by exclaiming—"Gentlemen, this is my table; and you will lose your right to the name by which I have addressed you, if you persist in an altercation which neither the rules of polished society, nor my own feelings can tolerate."

This appeal had the desired effect upon Steeple, who instantly reseated himself, grinding between his teeth an indistinct menace of vengeance, whenever a favourable opportunity should occur for carrying it into execution;

and as for my Lord Venal, who although nearly six feet high, trembled like a leaf in a gale of wind, when he saw Steeple assume a pugilistic attitude, he was much more disposed to express his gratitude to Kincat for interfering to save his noble body from being pummelled to a jelly, than to quarrel with his request; so that this terrible affair, which for a few moments threatened to disturb the peace of the whole company, and to make blood instead of wine flow over the festive board, was put an end to in an instant, and the jarring passions of the loud antagonists quelled by a single word from Kincat.

During all this time Fribble sat quiet, marking with extreme anxiety the progress of the subscription in his favor, and never troubling himself to resent, or even to notice the aspersions thrown out

against him, until Kincat had interfered, when thinking he might without danger to his own person, shew off a little courage, Fribble exclaimed—"My lord, be assured nothing but Mr. Kincat's positive request that we should be peaceable prevents me from demanding instant satisfaction for an insult so flagrant and outrageous as what you have just offered to me. But I shall find a fit time and place to revenge myself, and I shall have the honor to desire a friend of mine to call upon your lordship to arrange the preliminaries." His lordship nodded, and Fribble instantly began to think that he had gone a great deal too far, and would have been most happy to retract had it been in his power. Kincat, also, and the whole of the groupe were not a little amazed at this flash of spirit on the part of Fribble, although they knew the man

too well to believe that it meant any thing.

Any further progress in the quarrel was prevented by the entrance of a waiter with a note to Lord Stanza, which his lordship read aloud to his friends, and which contained the whole detail of the circumstance which took place in the hovel between Sir Henry Priapus and his tormentors, and the account of the manner in which the baronet was suffered to make his exit, upon undertaking to banish himself from the metropolis for six months, as well as of the bribes which he proffered to find out the persecutors who had laid and executed this plot against him, and of the suspicions he expressed with respect to Lord Stanza's being at the bottom of a scheme, which, however it terminated, would render him

for some time, the laughing-stock of all good company.

This letter put the whole of the company in excellent humour, with the exception of Fribble, who for a few moments seemed a little in dudgeon because the baronet had escaped before he had received all the punishment with which he had been threatened. This momentary disappointment, however, soon completely wore away, and before the company parted all was cheerfulness and harmony externally, although Steeple still felt it impossible altogether to forget the aspersions thrown upon him by Lord Venal, notwithstanding the latter, at the particular request of Kincat, before they broke up for the evening, had, with his hand, tendered a sort of apology or rather explanation to

Steeple, which he under all circumstances did not hesitate to accept.

The very day afterwards Kincat was given to understand by a waiter, that Sir Henry's valet had that morning settled his master's account and taken away his luggage from the hotel, stating that business of a most urgent description had called the baronet away to the continent, and it was his intention to spend the whole of the winter in some warmer climate, with a view to the complete renovation of his health, which for some time past, had been declining, and which he intended to devote some months to re-establish.

Nothing could be more agreeable to the feelings of the party at the hotel than this information, which at once re-

lieved them from all further trouble or account of Sir Henry Priapus, and as Lord Stanza congratulated his friend on the circumstance, he could not avoid adding—"By all the muses, my dear fellow, this frolic after all was not particularly marked by wisdom; for if Sir Henry had been disposed to put us to some trouble and expence, we laid ourselves very open to him by carrying it so far."

The only care of Fribble, now that Sir Henry was gone, and Lord Venal had taken no further notice of the dispute of the evening before, was to pick up some cash with an intention to start his new establishment. Lord Stanza, who had taken his subscription in hand, and who was generally sincere and indefatigable in every thing he undertook, made such exertions to collect him a

handsome sum, that in a very few days he conferred happiness on Fribble by placing in his hands a bank note for five hundred pounds, accompanied by a piece of friendly advice that he would be careful how he applied it, in order that by good care and management, it might lay the foundation of a provision which would promote his future comfort.

So inveterate, however, are the habits of a professed gamester; so infatuated is his mind beyond the reach of remedy; and so intense his thirst after gain, that no advice nor remonstrance is likely to effect any beneficial and permanent change. He still indulges in a golden dream, although every effort has a tendency to convince him more and more, did he not close up his heart against conviction, that it is but a dream, a mere

unsubstantial pageant of hopes and fears, in which reason may not find a place, he still persists in the face of ruin and even of death itself, until some fatal catastrophe, the result of his own desperation, close the scene.

Such indeed has not been the termination of Fribble's career during the three weeks in which the events of this novel took place; but as all Lord Stanza's advice had not power to prevent Fribble from re-visiting the gaming-table on the very next evening, and staking the whole sum of which he had been unexpectedly possessed, and notwithstanding his entire loss of the whole five hundred in a few hours, as he afterwards frequented the same sink of infamy and ruin, it is but too probable that the close of his career may add one more to the gloomy yet innumer-

able catalogue of those who after being once seduced from honorable pursuits to the practice of gaming have finished their lives by an act of suicide.

With regard to Steeple and Sophy they very soon moved from the hotel; for the Captain had so completely involved himself that he found he had no chance of extrication except by passing three months in prison, and as this was a residence to which he had been frequently accustomed, he felt none of those horrors nor of that repugnance to conform to the provisions of the act, which a man of different habits and different principles might have experienced. Sophy in a fit of drunkenness having extorted from him a written promise of marriage, accompanied him once more to the King's Bench, determined to cleave to him, not out of affection to his per-

son, nor the hope of any immediate profit to herself, but because she was aware that he was heir to an entailed estate, which might fall into his possession in the course of a few years, and the possession of which would place within her reach those luxuries and pleasures for which she perpetually sighed.

When therefore, the hackney coach arrived which was to convey them to the Bench, this redoubtable pair stepped into it with as much ease and cheerfulness as if they had been merely going to a rout, a ball, or an evening party; and Steeple with a degree of *non-chalance*, which was perhaps scarcely ever surpassed gave his card to the waiter in case any gentleman of his acquaintance should make inquiry after him, with a message

that he should be at home to receive his friends every day in the week.

Kincat, the very week after the departure of Sir Henry purchased a villa in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, whither with Sally he instantly removed, being determined to absent himself from the connections amongst which he had become, of late, so much entangled, to mingle only occasionally in the busy scenes of life, and by concentrating his hopes and wishes within the select circle of a few domestic friends, to endeavour to obtain a degree of happiness, which in every other sphere of action he had resolved to be unattainable.

At the head of this circle was Lord Stanza, but his lordship had scarcely paid his introductory visit to the villa of

his friend, before, with that wayward-ness of disposition which generally accompanies distinguishedgenius, he made up his mind to quit his native land, and to visit those classical shores, the scenery of which would recal to his imagination the events of old times, and the circumstances of empires which have longsince been swept away by the besom of destruction; and where he might, with peculiar advantage, cull those extraordinary powers of song with which heaven had endowed him. It was in vain that Kincat strove to dissuade his lordship: in vain did he paint to him the multiform attractions of his own country; the noble poet's soul had already winged its way across the intervening main, and was roaming upon hallowed ground, and his lordship declared his determination to repair thither with the utmost speed to be most fixed and un-

alterable. Kincat therefore abandoned the intention of keeping him back from his design; and a day or two after he had taken possession of his new residence, Lord Stanza took his leave of him, and bade adieu to the land which gave him birth, to gratify the irresistible impulse which drove him to become a wanderer upon shores far distant from his friends and his home.

With regard to Lord Venal, and Lord Booby, they refrained from visiting the hotel after the departure of Kincat; but the latter having received an invitation to consider himself one of Kincat's family party, availed himself of the permission; and although he was a young man of no very shining abilities, being merely able to deliver shallow opinions in grammatical language, yet there was something amiable about his disposition

which induced Kincat to select him as a companion who, if not gifted to ornament his domestic party, would by no means disgrace it, and might do very well to fill up a blank in the absence of superior minds, for he could play a good game at whist, and was a tolerable retailer of the tattle of the day.

Lord Venal's demeanour was such as could not make him a favourite. Puffed up with aristocratical pride, he seemed to consider himself too high for any association with untitled plebeians, and could scarcely discover how to carry himself with sufficient haughtiness in his intercourse with society. It is true he was obliged to sit in the House of Commons, and this circumstance tended in no slight degree to cause him mortification; but as he looked forward to a title, on the death of his father, who

was at this moment worn out by age and infirmities, he submitted to the degradation with as good a grace as he could, until the time should arrive when circumstances would call him to the Upper House, and give him a place amongst the peers of his native land.

Sir Abraham Belton, who merely came to town to get a poem published, by means of his title, obtained admission to the table of a dashing bookseller, who, on hearing the plan of his proposed poem, and after listening to about a hundred lines, instantly entered into a treaty with the author for the copy-right, and became the happy purchaser for about five hundred pounds; and Sir Abraham having thus advantageously terminated the business which brought him away from the verdant vallies, lofty mountains, embowering re-

cesses and cooling groves of his country residence, to breathe the infectious and oppressive atmosphere of the metropolis, as to be daily stunned by the rattle of unceasing business, with a light heart and recruited purse, flew to his native home again.

CONCLUSION.



SINCE the occurrence of the preceding events no change has taken place in the circumstances of Kincat and Sally, who still inhabit their villa; and although the *accouchement* of Sally took place, at the usual time, the production of a dead child disappointed all the hopes and expectations which had been founded on the anticipation of its appearance on the stage of life. Kincat has mixed much with the world, and has rendered himself particularly notorious by several circumstances in his public life; but these matters have no influence over his domestic happiness, which is uninterrupted.

Lord Stanza has returned to England, and has married, left his wife, and become again a voluntary exile. Report has lavished much abuse upon his character, and interested enmity has echoed the tale through all the circles of fashionable and unfashionable life; but report is a common liar, and if his lordship's own account be correct, which we have no substantial reason, to dispute, he is "a man more sinned against than sinning!'

Fribble continues to this hour an inveterate gamester; spunging upon all who are willing to yield him food or money; and every farthing he can collect is still thrown into the common sink. Two or three adventitious and momentary flashes of fortune have produced the effect of making him still more eager and insatiate after this de-

structive vice, which must, one day or another, terminate in his complete ruin.

Steeple and Sophy are still the inmates of the King's Bench, for the former, on being brought up for his discharge under the new act, was opposed on the ground of swindling; and, after a patient investigation of some hours, was remanded to endure the punishment, in such cases, decreed by the act; so that at present Sophy and himself are likely to pass some years longer within the unwholesome walls of a crowded prison.

Lord Booby is not a whit more bright, nor Lord Venal a jot more gentlemanly than at the time when the events narrated in the former part of this work took place; although the former is a vast deal more popular and better

known, and the latter has risen to his new title, and is now known by the name of Lord Oakley; in consequence of which he has taken his seat in the upper house, and is now as much an instrument of the ministers as any instrument there.

THE END.

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